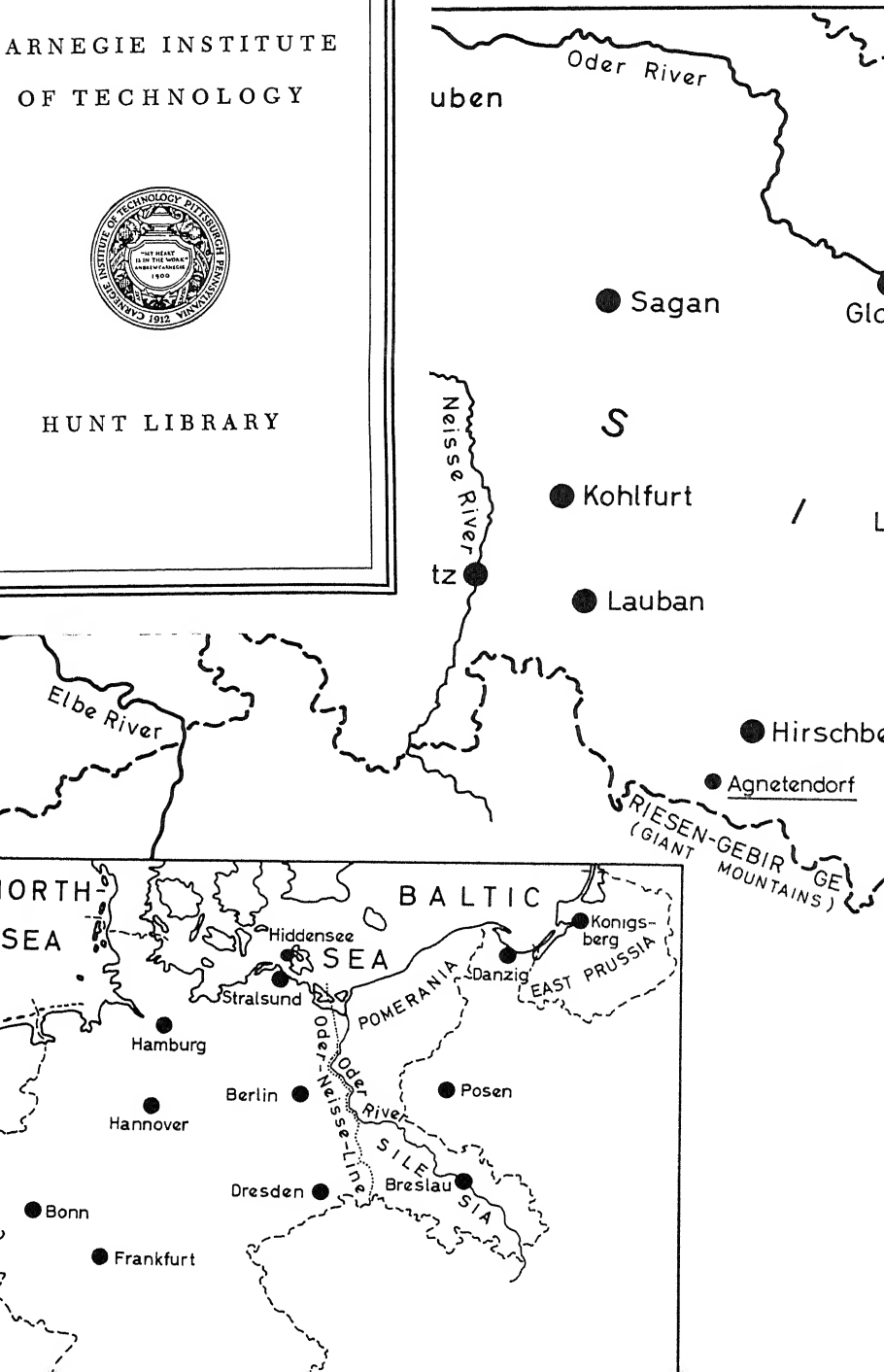
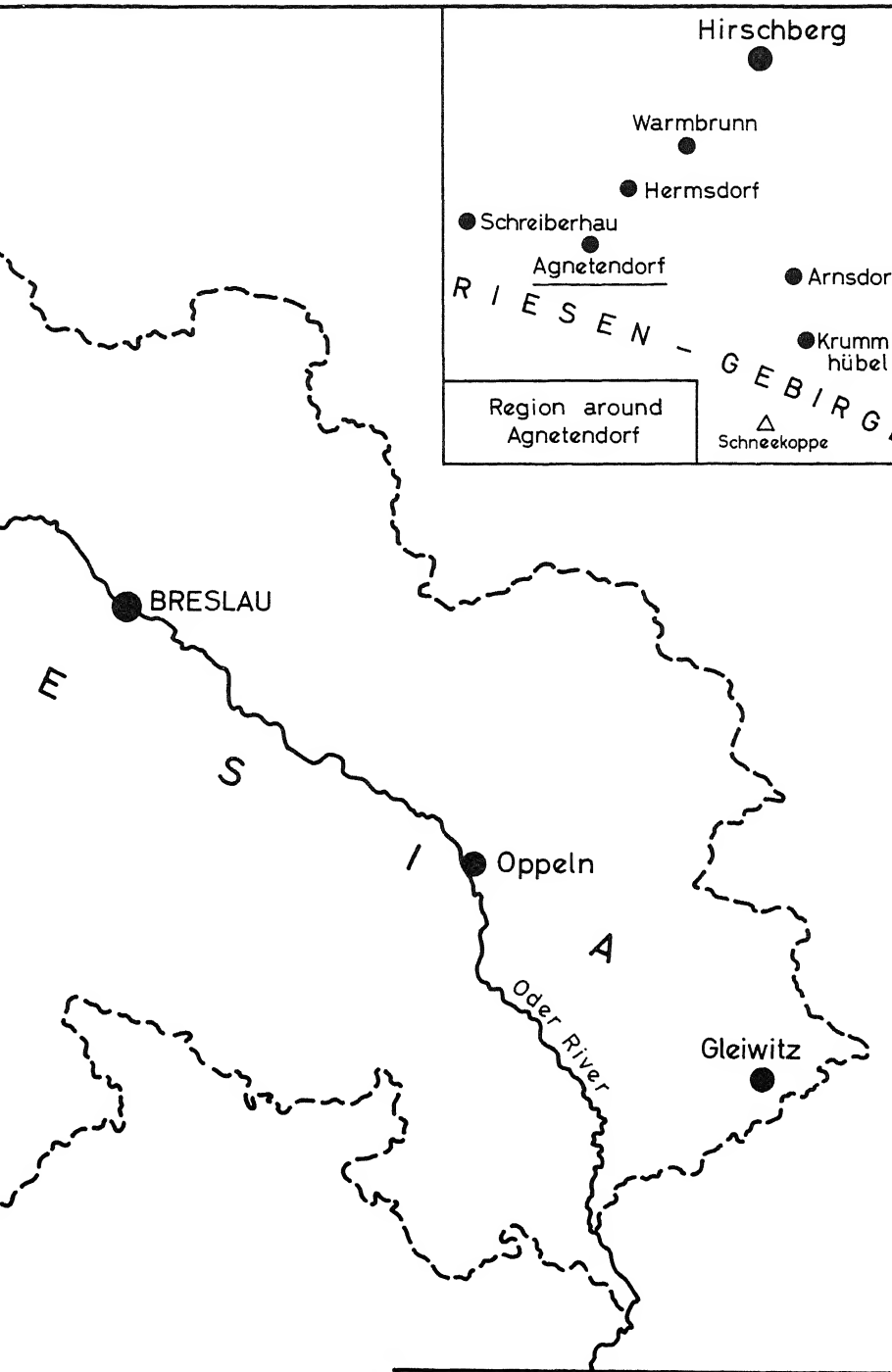


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GERHART HAUPTMANN
and
SILESIA

*A Report on the German Dramatist's
Last Days in his Occupied Homeland*

by
GERHART POHL

Translated from the German
by William I. Morgan

Introduction
by Erich Funke

University of North Dakota Press
Grand Forks, North Dakota
in collaboration with the
Göttingen Research Committee
1962

The original German Edition was entitled
Bin ich noch in meinem Hause?
Die letzten Tage Gerhart Hauptmanns
and was published by Lettner Verlag,
Berlin-Dahlem, 1953

“Am I Still In My Own House?”

—Gerhart Hauptmann’s last words

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*(All photographs reproduced with the permission of
Gerhart Pohl and the Lettner Verlag)*

Der ist in tiefster Seele treu,
Wer die Heimat liebt wie du.*

—Theodor Fontane

Introduction

For hundreds of years Silesia has given Germany outstanding poets and thinkers. The Protestant mystic Jakob Böhme (1575-1624) was a Silesian. In 1624, Martin Opitz, head of the First Silesian School of poets, published his *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey* (ON GERMAN POETRY) which set the pattern of German Baroque poetry. The lyricist Paul Fleming and the meditative Friedrich von Logau belonged to this school and so did Andreas Gryphius, Germany's greatest dramatist before Lessing. A countryman and contemporary of Gryphius was Angelus Silesius, the ablest Catholic lyricist of the Baroque age. Toward the end of the seventeenth century two poets of the late German Baroque, Daniel Casper von Lohenstein and Christian Hofmann von Hofmannswaldau, represent the Second Silesian School. Also the highly gifted Christian Günther, the first great German lyricist after Walther von der Vogelweide, was born in Silesia. Joseph von Eichendorff, one of the outstanding lyrical talents of German romanticism, praises the beautiful scenery of his native Silesia in his songs. From the same part of Germany came Karl von Holtei, noted dramatist and actor, and Gustav Freitag, author of widely-read cultural and historical novels. Hermann Stehr, who lived from 1864 to 1940, liked to depict his fellow-Silesians and their beliefs and legends in his novels. He was a close contemporary of the author Carl Hauptmann and his younger brother Gerhart, who was to spread the literary reputation of his home province throughout the world.

All these Silesian writers have some characteristic features in common: they are deeply rooted in their native soil, show an inclination for the mystic side of life, and have a warm heart for their fellow men.

In Gerhart Hauptmann, Silesia has given the world one of the greatest dramatists of all times. Yet he was not only a dramatist. He also wrote a number of remarkable novels: *Der Narr in Christo Emmanuel Quint* (EMMANUEL QUINT, THE FOOL IN CHRIST), 1910, *Atlantis*, 1912, *Die Insel der grossen Mutter* (THE ISLAND OF THE GREAT MOTHER), 1925, *Wanda*, 1928, *Das Buch der Leidenschaft* (THE BOOK OF PASSION), 1930, *Im Wirbel der Berufung* (IN THE WHIRL OF VOCATION), 1936. His short stories are masterpieces of their type: *Bahnwärter Thiel*

*He is loyal to the depths of his soul / Who loves his homeland as you do.
(Translator's Note.)

(SIGNALMAN THIEL), 1887, *Der Ketzer von Soana* (THE HERETIC OF SOANA), 1918, *Das Meerwunder* (MIRACLE OF THE SEA), 1934, and *Mignon*, 1947. He also wrote two verse epics, *Promethidenlos* (PROMETHEAN FATE), 1885, and *Anna*, 1921; and numerous lyric poems prove the wide range of his poetic ability. But Hauptmann's fame and literary importance rest on the unique wealth, variety, and power of his dramatic genius.

When his drama *Vor Sonnenaufgang* (BEFORE DAYBREAK), written in 1889, was performed on the Berlin *Freie Bühne* in 1893, it created a theatrical scandal, but the world also realized that the worn-out patterns of the German traditional drama were now replaced by a new and vigorous naturalism which was in line with the philosophic, social, and aesthetic tendencies of the modern age. Other works in the same style followed in quick succession: *Das Friedensfest* (THE RECONCILIATION), 1890, *Einsame Menschen* (LONESOME LIVES), 1891, *Die Weber* (THE WEAVERS), 1892, *Kollege Krampton* (COLLEAGUE KRAMPTON), 1892, *Der Biberpelz* (THE BEAVER COAT), 1893.

In *Die Weber* Hauptmann wrote a drama of deep human compassion and a powerful artistic expression which will remain a monument to his creative genius and his love of man. He himself, the grandson of a Silesian weaver, knew from hearsay and from personal observation the misery of the people he depicted in his work, and their dialect was his own, the same dialect which 250 years earlier was spoken by the characters of Gryphius' charming comedy *Die geliebte Dürnrose* (THE BELOVED WILD ROSE). *Der Biberpelz* shows him as a master of comedy. In this play he satirizes the representatives of Wilhelminian society who are outsmarted by the common sense and the versatile morality of a simple washerwoman.

In *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (HANNELE'S ASSUMPTION), 1893, with the naturalistic atmosphere of a village poor house and its inmates, the poet mixes the highly symbolic dream world of the dying girl. Also the language in perfect stylistic coordination reflects the two levels on which the action develops. Beside the realistic Silesian dialect of the villagers we hear verses of the highest poetical quality, which reaches its climax in Christ's description of Eternity. Also Hauptmann's power of characterization here is unsurpassed. The same mixture of naturalism and symbolism (some call it romanticism) prevails in *Die versunkene Glocke* (THE SUNKEN BELL), 1896, which the author called *ein deutsches Märchendrama* (a German fairy tale play). It depicts the struggles of the artist with the hostile forces of society and of nature which he tries in vain to overcome. The frustration which Heinrich, the bell founder, feels corresponded to Hauptmann's own inner situation after the failure of his historical play *Florian Geyer*. Numerous other dramas show the poet's growing insight into human nature and his deep sense of social responsibility, such as *Fuhrmann Henschel* (DRAYMAN HENSCHEL), 1898, *Michael Kramer*, 1900, *Der arme Heinrich* (POOR HENRY),

1902, *Rose Bernd*, 1903, *Gabriel Schillings Flucht* (GABRIEL SCHILLING'S FLIGHT), 1912, *Der weisse Heiland* (THE WHITE SAVIOUR), 1932, *Dorothea Angermann*, 1925, *Vor Sonnenuntergang* (BEFORE SUNDOWN), 1932, and others. Among the various motives and stylistic patterns of his work the dramas of classical content and style deserve special attention since ancient Greece and its culture symbolize Hauptmann's second spiritual home. Already in his early epic *Promethidenlos* and in his travel book *Griechischer Frühling* (SPRINGTIME IN GREECE), 1908, we feel his enthusiasm for the land of Homer and Pericles. His noble humanism expresses itself also in a number of dramatic productions, e.g., in *Der Bogen des Odysseus* (THE BOW OF ODYSSEUS), 1914, and in the Atridae Tetralogy: *Iphigenie in Delphi*, 1941, *Iphigenie in Aulis*, 1944, *Agamemnons Tod* (AGAMEMNON'S DEATH), and *Electra*, 1948.

An authorized edition of Hauptmann's works in 17 volumes, published on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, contains forty-five dramas, eighteen stories and novels, six epic poems, two autobiographical works, two volumes of poetry, and the "meditation" in lyrical prose *Sonnen* (SUNS). Some later works and numerous fragments of dramas and novels still await publication. An impressive achievement in scope and quality of a poet who, like Goethe, was fortunate to live a long and active life, and who, a modern Faust, redeemed himself through unrelenting striving.

Gerhart Hauptmann was born in 1862 in the Silesian resort town of Salzbrunn and died in nearby Agnetendorf in 1946. Thus the circle of his life opened and closed in his native province, but from here his fame spread to the farthest corners of the globe. The son of an innkeeper, he started his career as an agricultural apprentice. For a while he had the ambition of becoming a sculptor; in Jena he also studied philosophy, history, and natural science, only to recognize that his creative talent was in the field of poetry. He won the Grillparzer Prize, and in 1912, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Also a number of honorary doctorates (Oxford, Columbia University, and others) were conferred on him. In the earlier years of his manhood he lived for a time in Berlin and Dresden. Travels led him to Italy, Greece, England, and America. Intermittently he stayed in Rapallo in Italy, and he had his summer home on the Baltic isle of Hiddensee near Rügen. But his path always led him back to Silesia, at first to his house in Schreiberhau, and later, after 1900, to Agnetendorf. There he built *Haus Wiesenstein* (Meadow Rock Manor), where he lived for the last forty-six years of his life, a home furnished and decorated in the most exquisite taste and famous for the cultured and warm-hearted hospitality of the poet and his musically gifted wife, Margarete. Here he spent the fateful years of the Second World War, which were to bring unspeakable destruction and misery to Germany and his Silesian home country.

Gerhart Pohl, a writer in his own right and one of Hauptmann's most devoted and talented disciples, tells the story of the poet's last two years in his book *Bin ich noch in meinem Haus? Die letzten Tage Gerhart Hauptmanns* (Lettner-Verlag, Berlin). Pohl, also a son of Silesia, spent most of this time with or near the aged and ailing poet. He discusses Hauptmann's last works as they were written during these years and he speaks of the dramatist's heart-breaking experiences, especially during the last months of the war. We learn about the quickly deteriorating military and political situation of the Germans on the Silesian front, and accompany the sick poet to Dresden where he witnesses the horrifying destruction of this beautiful city which he had loved so much. Instead of seeking refuge in western Germany, however, he returns to Agnetendorf to be in his threatened home and with his Silesian neighbors. We hear the thunder of the approaching armies and witness the occupation of the Riesengebirge (and Agnetendorf) by the Russians, and later by a revenge-thirsty Polish populace from whom the poet has to be protected by the Russian Army.

Hauptmann was deeply influenced by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and their social message. On his part he had influenced Maxim Gorki, with whom he had also corresponded, and many of the younger generation of Russian writers, and once he had done his best to help the hungry peasants of Russia. He, therefore, was regarded highly by the Russians and was well treated by the representatives of their army and government. But they did not prevent the Poles from taking over the administration of his home district, its complete annexation, and the brutal expulsion of a German population who had lived here for over 700 years and regarded Silesia as their homeland. To them the aged author had been a consolation and hope. Now their home country collapsed around them, and with German Silesia Hauptmann's life also came to an end. The last words of the dying poet "*Bin ich noch in meinem Haus?*" are symbolic. The story of his death and of the departure of the dead poet from his native land is deeply moving and in Pohl's vivid presentation reminds the reader of a scene from Dante's *Inferno*.

This significant book is worth being made accessible to an English-speaking public. Hauptmann, because he did not flee from the indignities of the Nazi regime, has been much maligned in this country and abroad. Pohl's book paints the true picture of Gerhart Hauptmann, who despised Hitler and returned courageously to his suffering fellow-Silesians to give them hope and consolation in their despair. In the hour of Germany's deepest misery and humiliation he was a symbol of the best of his country's cultural achievements. If there is anything like "*das ewige Deutschland*" (eternal Germany), it was alive in the heart of Gerhart Hauptmann.

ERICH FUNKE
 Professor Emeritus
 State University of Iowa

1 Dresden

"For the first time that I can remember I am going to sleep through New Year's Eve."

With these unexpected words Gerhart Hauptmann had declined the little celebration that a group of his friends had planned. We were a bit disappointed—and also somewhat disturbed. What had caused the sudden melancholy?

The last months of the year 1944 had passed with improbable tranquility at Wiesenstein in Agnetendorf, Hauptmann's home for the past four decades. While one German city after another sank in ruins, the *Riesengebirge** had remained "Germany's air raid shelter."

Tens of thousands of refugees had streamed there from the large cities and industrial centers of western Germany, but the accommodations available in the many resort hotels and tourist homes had been sufficient to give them all shelter, and Hauptmann's "castle" had been unaffected by the influx.

At the age of eighty-two he had been able to continue to write in an atmosphere conducive to creativity and had remained the same vigorous, sociable man that he had been all his life. No sickness, no special hardships despite the fifth year of war; peace in his beloved mountains, peace in his stout old heart. And then suddenly the dark foreboding was there . . .

He had been especially cheerful during Advent. Graceful and light-hearted verses had come to him in abundance: for example, one about the angels Harut and Marut, who go for a stroll on earth, get drunk in a tavern and make blasphemous speeches, until the gracious Anahid (Dawn) appears and begins to sing and dance so ravishingly that even God the Father keeps time on His throne and encourages His own dear Son, the Saviour, to join the dance.

*Mountain range between Silesia and Bohemia (Czechoslovakia). (All footnotes are by the translator.)

*Und Er tat's! Da brach das Gold in Menge
herrlich leuchtend aus des Morgens Toren,
höchster Freude höchste ward geboren,
alles wird ein seliges Gedränge.**

Shortly before Christmas four village children, draped and muffled in white, had been received at Wiesenstein with their Christ Child's cradle and had recited the simple old Christmas sayings. That had been the custom for many a year.

When the playful children discovered Hauptmann's twelve-year-old grandson, Arne, among the spectators gathered in the hall, the one playing the part of *Knecht Ruprecht*,† who was no older than Arne himself, addressed him with a pretended gruffness that was quite effective: "Y'oughta pray!"

Little Arne, who usually lived in South Germany, did not understand the Silesian dialect immediately; but then, unabashed, he said the Lord's Prayer. And his grandfather, touched by the ancient customs of his homeland, surreptitiously shed a few happy tears.

Hauptmann had also spent Christmas Eve in a cheerful state of mind. He had seated himself in an easy chair with the old-fashioned solemnity that he was fond of displaying on special occasions. Beside him sat his wife, Margarete, and his faithful friend and mentor, Dr. C. F. W. Behl, who had been living in Agnetendorf for two years. Hauptmann's secretary, Anni, and the three servants stood in the background. Mrs. Ellida Behl, an accomplished violinist, took her place by the piano, where the highly-talented little Arne was already seated. Together they played the second movement of Bach's A minor concerto. Later Hauptmann said, "The boy's visit is my best Christmas present." He was exceptionally moved, according to Dr. Behl, to whom I am indebted for the description of these Christmas holidays.

"Is he having premonitions of death?" I asked his old friend. "Or is he worrying about the coming catastrophe that now seems inevitable for Germany?" Behl looked at me. We were united in our love for Gerhart Hauptmann and understood each other perfectly as far as the old Merlin was concerned. Behind his glasses Behl's kind eyes were filled with a grief that I had never seen there before.

"Since New Year's Eve he has been an entirely different person," he said quietly.

The old man's peace and harmony of mood were indeed destroyed. He seemed to have lost all his composure. Did he have a foreboding of his approaching fate, still shapeless in the distance? We have no authenticated word from his lips during this period.

*And He did it! A golden glow then shone / glorious from the gates of morn, / highest of high joys was born, / and all the blessed throng around the throne.

†A folklore character who accompanies St. Nicholas and classifies the good and the bad children.

On January 5 Margarete* became quite seriously ill. Like all imaginative people, Hauptmann had had a great fear of illness all his life. In fact, he had occasionally called himself a hypochondriac. But on this January day in 1945, while outside the snow "grew" (as the people of the Riesengebirge say) and transformed the often gloomy mountains into a bright enchanted world of unlikely shapes and colors, Behl found the old man in the Biedermeier room on the top floor of the house looking quite disconsolate. Even his beloved Arne, who was engaged in reading aloud to him the American Negro novel *Porgy* by Heyward, was not able to cheer him up.

"I am deprived of my lifelong companion," he cried passionately and gloomily.

Margarete and Gerhart Hauptmann had met in the prime of life. She had been young, beautiful, and an artist of promise, he an already famous writer in his thirties. Before they were finally able to seal their love match in 1904, they had had to go through an exhausting and stormy period, years of vehement bickering with Hauptmann's first wife, Marie.

A union tested by suffering is usually a strong and lasting one. The marriage of the Hauptmanns had produced a complete merging of two personalities. Seldom were two people with such distinct and, moreover, totally different characters so attuned to each other as Margarete was to Gerhart—and he no less so to her. In that respect, too, they were perfect artists. In four decades they had scarcely been separated for a day.

Only four days after that mournful afternoon, on January 9, Margarete was able to be present again at the customary hour for tea. Thin and pale, she lay on the sofa, his beloved Gretchen.† The old man beamed. And Dr. Behl, who was present, has written that he greatly admired the energy and self-control that enabled Margarete to conceal her state of health from Hauptmann.

But organic illness cannot be overcome by energy and self-control alone. The attending physician shook his head doubtfully. He suggested that Margarete should go for a thorough examination at St. Hedwig's Hospital in nearby Bad Warmbrunn, where all modern facilities were available. Once again Hauptmann was overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness. When it finally turned out that the hospital was full, he acted as if he had been freed from an oppressive curse. Behl called the moment a "truly dramatic easing of tension, which was immediately and suitably celebrated." And then suddenly a vague plan for a trip to Dresden was broached.

Hauptmann was on fire with the idea. For days he busied himself with thoughts of the trip. On January 15, when the news of the destruction of the old town of Nürnberg was made known, showing the pitilessness of total air war, he said only, "World history has come a

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cropper." His Dresden seemed to remain "under the protection of the gods" . . .

Margarete described Hauptmann's mood at that time wonderfully well. She declared that "his yearning for Dresden had become an obsession; and we can say now that it was like an obsession with the thought of leaping into Mt. Etna."

Only the news of a minor air attack on Dresden caused considerable hesitation. Mrs. Hauptmann's condition remained serious. The hospital in Bad Warmbrunn still could not make room for her. At the same time, developments on the eastern front proceeded at a headlong pace. For the first time there was concern about the possible fate of Wiesenstein, with its valuable collections and the author's irreplaceable archives, which included almost all the manuscripts, books, and utterances of any kind by and about Gerhart Hauptmann since 1889.

Besides, peace was gone from this "mystic protective armor of his soul," as Hauptmann had called Wiesenstein. The streams of refugees from the east had increased to such an extent that the teacher in Agnetendorf, functioning also as housing commissioner, was obliged to assign to Hauptmann's house two women and seven children, who were accepted without cavil and provided for as well as possible.

The lamentable condition of these homeless people, the disappearance of the tranquility necessary for writing, the lack of all friends except the faithful Behl, a catarrh that afflicted the old man and, finally, the absence of Margarete, who had at last entered St. Hedwig's Hospital after all—all this had produced in Hauptmann such a strong feeling that he had been abandoned, that all day long he simply would not allow Behl to leave him alone, even for a short time. The old man was melancholy, and a prey to thoughts of the transitory nature of the things of this world.

On February 1 the die was cast. Dr. Weidner's Sanitorium in Oberloschwitz* had declared that it was prepared to admit the author and to provide suitable sickroom accommodations for Margarete. "My spirit has run aground, and I need a respite," said Hauptmann. He emphasized that he was not leaving Agnetendorf "because of any sort of fear of anything at all." "I do not want to avoid the fate of Silesia," he declared repeatedly.

Soon everything was arranged. Behl had been given authorization to take the archives to western Germany if necessary. As the two friends walked once more through the familiar rooms, Hauptmann surveyed the art objects that he had collected in the past five decades. In silence he took a long, farewell look at the marble torso of Aphrodite, the head of Socrates, the mask of Napoleon, the valuable paintings by Liebermann, Corinth, Leo von König, and the many other major and minor treasures in his collection. Days of nervous waiting followed. The car that was to have come from Dresden did not appear. Finally, on February 5, at three

*A suburb of Dresden.

o'clock in the afternoon, a wood-burning car rattled and roared up the steep slope to Wiesenstein. There was tremendous confusion during the preparations for Hauptmann's departure, the details of which C. F. W. Behl has described vividly. He himself escorted the old man through the snow-covered park. "Strange feelings moved me; and Hauptmann, too, as he walked slowly down the familiar paths, leaning heavily on my arm, seemed affected by similar feelings. Was it farewell for ever . . .?"

Behl saw the old man "sitting in the car, wedged into terribly cramped quarters between trunks and suitcases and with an expression on his face that was not exactly happy."

At first everything went well in Dresden. The sanatorium had furnished Hauptmann with a cottage of his own in the park on the idyllic Heights of Loschwitz, above Dresden. His sons Eckart and Benvenuto put in an appearance to see their father once again after a long interval. Family and business problems were the subjects of conversations, in which the old man took a decisive part. His stubborn bronchial catarrh improved in Dresden's milder climate. Hauptmann was his old self again.

"Herder was right: this city of Dresden has something of Florence, something unmistakably Italian," he said while taking a stroll on the heights and looking down on the city in the bright winter sunshine. And he thought of the course of his own life, which had been intimately connected with Dresden.

Over there, beyond the horizon, stood Hohenhaus, where his first wife, Marie Thienemann, had grown up; in St. John's Church down in the city they had been married fifty-nine years ago; he himself had attended drawing classes at the Royal Academy on Brühl Terrace the previous year. In later years he had returned again and again to his exquisite Florence-on-the-Elbe—to witness the triumphs and failures of his dramas, to visit the valuable collections there as a connoisseur of art, but also as a man in the grip of passion, in an effort to come to terms with his once-loved Marie, the mother of his first three sons. And in the period of his world-renown he had quite often stayed with his friends down there right by the Elbe in the comfortable Hotel Bellevue, living like a prince. The old man sighed. "Really, one is compelled to love it, my jewel, my Dresden. May it never share the fate of other cities!" he said, making the last sentence a short and fervent prayer.

That was on February 8th, in the bright sunshine—five days before the city was destroyed.

Hauptmann's mood changed for the worse on that very afternoon. It was then definitely determined that Margarete was suffering from an acute disease of the gall-bladder. The doctor insisted that the patient remain in a hospital in the city. Hauptmann, in Oberloschwitz, once

more was deprived of his lifelong companion. In addition, the reports from the eastern front disturbed him. The Russians had overrun half of Upper Silesia in a few days and had penetrated to the Oder from the north. "What is to happen to Silesia, to Germany, and to this crazy world of ours?" he murmured to himself. Shrugging his shoulders, he repeated the sentence that was no longer able to comfort him: "World history has come a cropper."

Overwhelmed by grief, he began to drink—rapidly and too much. Much too much for his eighty-two years. The faithful Anni, who hastened back and forth between Oberloschwitz and the hospital in the city and tried to care for both the Hauptmanns, was in despair. She, who so honored the man for whom she had been working for seven years, enlisted all her feminine wiles to keep him from drinking. But it was in vain. The old Merlin could really "conjure"—and not just with words. Again and again a new bottle appeared and the seal was immediately broken. That his health suffered was soon apparent. He began to cough again, failed to eat, and looked sickly.

When Anni finally confided in Margarete, the sick woman, with her usual self-command, was "immediately well." In actual fact, her sickness had turned out to be less serious than had at first seemed the case. Mrs. Hauptmann returned to Oberloschwitz. And all Hauptmann's tension disappeared. He immediately ceased drinking, ate properly, slept—and began to write . . .

And so dawned the 13th of February, 1945. Again the winter sunshine gleamed on this Florence-on-the-Elbe. Gerhart Hauptmann was in a "creative mood," as he was accustomed to call a heightened awareness of his own existence. He took a walk in the morning and immediately afterwards dictated the wonderful poem *Zauberblume* (MAGIC FLOWER), which will now bear forever the date of the destruction of Dresden.

The little group of people who peacefully ate their noonday meal in the cottage in the sanatorium park had no idea of what was to happen that day. After dinner Hauptmann took a long nap. The customary hour for tea with his wife was spent pleasantly and harmoniously. Anni read aloud, and the old man meditated. After supper they considered whether it would not be more pleasant to move down to Hotel Bellevue by the Elbe.

Three hours later the hotel was a sea of flame and the next morning a pile of smoking rubble. When the sirens announced the danger of an air raid at 9:00 in the evening, probably not one of the 600,000 regular residents of Dresden or the approximately 200,000 refugees from the East, who were staying there at the time, suspected that this piercing howl was the funeral music for one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

Gerhart Hauptmann, who had gone to bed especially early, was already sound asleep by that time. No one woke him. What could happen in this city, which had no armament industry worth mentioning? Especially in Oberloschwitz with its sanatoriums, hospitals, and villas?

Hadn't the air attack on January 16 been only a nuisance raid? So they thought . . .

Meanwhile the first planes of the enemy formations had reached the city. There was a tremendous, crashing, thundering roar, as if the earth itself were splitting into a thousand pieces. No one who lived through that horrible moment will ever forget it. And no such person would be able to say, from his own recollections, whether it lasted only seconds or hours on end. Eight hundred thousand human beings, paralyzed with fright or instantaneously annihilated, witnessed this modern inferno.

On the Loschwitz heights, too, the inferno had its effect. The lights went out, the window panes were shattered, the furniture in the little house was knocked over.

Margarete and Anni had pulled Hauptmann out of bed. They helped him get into his trousers, his jacket and coat. Still drunk with sleep, the old man did not understand for quite a while what was going on. The three of them sat silently in the cold air raid shelter in the basement until the grey dawn came.

Meanwhile, the incandescent tidal wave of fire and dense smoke had inundated the central part of Dresden. From Blasewitz to Löbtau thousands of fountains of red, violet, yellow, black-brown, greenish-white, shimmering-blue, opalescent flames shot up and soon ran together. The heavens, previously cloudless, were suddenly blotted out with the strangest shapes, formed from the fiery vapors and smoke, blown along as if by a storm wind; and out of them what seemed to be flashes of lightning gleamed again and again. And a strange singing filled the air, such as had never been heard before, the result of the tremendous suction. A conflagration of this magnitude had never been known before.

In the early light of morning Hauptmann tottered back to bed through the broken glass and other debris of the cottage in the park. He was stiff and silent, his face as rigid as a mask. For a few moments he had looked at the morning sky, iridescent in the reflected glow of the thousands of fires, and had seen the billowing clouds of smoke from the raging conflagration. The rain of ash had formed a greyish deposit on his face, unshaven and worn from the sleepless night. He still had no clear concept of the extent of the destruction.

Sleep—if he could only sleep. He yearned to return to the comfort of his own personal dream-world, from which he had been roused so abruptly. But sleep did not come. The agitation of his flight to shelter, the odor of smoke, and the coldness of the windowless room soon drove the old man out of bed again.

He went out into the park. The sight of the sea of flames below him in the valley and extending to the far horizon was beyond his comprehension. "My Dresden, my jewel," Hauptmann stammered, horrified, and tears formed in his large old eyes.

He was no longer aware of the filthy drizzle of rain and ashes. He had braced his back firmly against a tree so as not to fall over from agitation and weakness. His slouch hat was pulled far down over his face.

In the still rising tide of fire and smoke, details could scarcely be made out. From Oberloschwitz, Dresden looked like a second Sodom. Occasionally the suction of the conflagration caused the improbable-looking mass of smoke-clouds to rise for a few seconds. There stood Chiaveri's church, the *Hofkirche*, with the most elegant spire in the world, surrounded by dancing golden sparks. How long would it resist destruction?

Hauptmann remained leaning against the tree. "At that moment I wanted to die," he told me later in Agnetendorf.

In this first tearful moment of readiness for death his poetic genius was once more called upon to express, as well as words can, what his heart was suffering.

"A person who has forgotten how to weep . . .," whispered the old man, amid the smoky vapors that rolled up to the Loschwitz Heights from the burning below. And in his horror at the crime, sentence after sentence came from his lips.

A profoundly disturbing and imperishable bit of German prose, this funeral lament for Dresden was born in the moment of Hauptmann's first deep pain. The final version, which he dictated later without pause, reads as follows:

"A person who has forgotten how to weep, learns how once more at the sight of the destruction of Dresden. Till now, this clear morning star of my youth has illumined the world. I know that there are quite a few good people in England and America, to whom the divine light of the Sistine Madonna was not unknown, and who now weep, profoundly and grievously affected by the extinguishing of this star.

"And I have lived to see personally the destruction of Dresden by all the hells of Sodom and Gomorrha, caused by the airplanes of the enemy. As I use the words 'live to see,' that still seems like a miracle to me. I do not take myself seriously enough to believe that Fate has kept this horror in store expressly for me and in this very spot in the world that is almost the dearest of all to me.

"I am very close to leaving this life and I envy all my dead comrades of the spirit who did not live to see this horror.

"I weep. Do not take offense at the word 'weep'; the greatest heroes of antiquity, Pericles and many others, were not ashamed of it.

"From Dresden, from its wonderfully sustained nurturing of the fine arts, literature, and music, glorious streams have flowed throughout all the world, and England and America have also drunk from them thirstily.

"Have they forgotten that?

"I am nearly eighty-three years old and stand before God with a last request, which is unfortunately without force and comes only from the heart: it is the prayer that God should love and purify and refine mankind more than heretofore—for their own salvation."

Hauptmann, still leaning against the tree, was exhausted. The tears streamed down his wrinkled old face. Finally he went into another

cottage in the park, which had been made ready for him in place of the damaged one, and lay down on the bed.

And so it came about that the daylight attack of February 14, which began at 2:00 p.m. and completed the work of destruction, once more surprised Hauptmann in his sleep. With Margarete and Anni he was just about to seek the air raid shelter when ten rather small bombs fell in the park. Shortly afterward, a heavy bomb exploded fifteen yards from their cottage.

Gerhart Hauptmann was sitting in an easy chair in his overcoat. He pushed the collar up, pulled his hat down lower on his forehead, and waited . . . "I was waiting for the blow that would put an end to me," he said a little later to his wife, who described the above events. When the moment of fright and then the paralysis of the senses had passed, they saw what had happened. Doors and windows were broken and the walls split. Hauptmann was covered with mortar, as though he were sitting, covered with snow, in a winter landscape. And he looked as stiff, as lifeless, as though he were frozen . . .

With their last strength the two women managed to get him to the shelter. He did not move there, either, and remained as though frozen. And later he was found to be suffering from a partial paralysis. The old man's vital force seemed destroyed.

But Fate was keeping in store for him a long and weary way through Germany's catastrophe—from this 14th of February, 1945, till the 6th of June, 1946, when he closed his eyes forever in Agnetendorf.

For a while he was in a miserable state. His physicians feared imminent death. The patient was only half conscious and preoccupied with events of the past. He spoke sentences that he had formerly spoken himself or had heard from others. There was the visit of Rolf Italiander a year ago—down there in the Bellevue . . . What had he said to the young man as they were eating dinner together? Oh, yes, that he had really wanted to die in Rome . . . "But now things will probably be different . . ." That was what he had said to his guest. And was he to die like this—in this skeleton of former Beauty, after the hells of Sodom and Gomorrha? No, indeed! May God preserve him from it . . .

And again and again he was frightened into full consciousness and torn from the healing twilight-world. He had to go to the "confounded shelter." Why should he go there? It was nonsense—"sticking-plaster on a plague blister." In that cold hole in the ground he would only get sicker . . .

And in fact, sciatica began to plague Hauptmann. It became difficult for him to walk. Moreover, Loschwitz was buzzing with horrible reports and rumors. No matter whom one spoke to—doctor, nurse, attendant, messenger, any of the patients, or even a chance passer-by—they were all distraught messengers of evil tidings from the inferno down below. The multitudes of the wounded, who had fled the burning hospitals of the city and laboriously made their way to the Loschwitz Heights, still wearing hospital garb—these would have sufficed to tell the tale.

According to their reports, there were thousands and thousands of people buried in the collapsed shelters, on the bombed streets and squares, and under the mountainous ruins of the houses. Many were said to have jumped like living torches into the Elbe and been drowned. In Gross Garden there were said to be dense masses of corpses, lying or sitting there. A beginning was being made at burning them or burying them hastily in mass graves, since otherwise epidemics were to be feared . . . Fantastic statistics filled the air—two hundred thousand, three hundred and fifty thousand dead. Everything grew until it became gigantic, grotesque . . .

Margarete tried to keep the worst reports from the sick man. But his senses were alert again, even though his physical vitality remained at a low ebb.

"Which of Dresden's treasures are definitely destroyed? And what has come through that hell and survived by some miracle?" Hauptmann asked.

He began to provide himself with "an idea of the actual facts, no matter how frightful they may be." Restricted to his bed or an easy chair, he learned one horrible fact after another as the days went by.

One morning he declared, "I have only one desire left: to return to my Wiesenstein." Margarete told me later at Agnetendorf, "I understood his yearning immediately. After all, before his trip he had declared more than once that he had no desire to avoid the fate of Silesia. But how could his wish be fulfilled? At the beginning of March the Red Army had already advanced far into Silesia . . ."

Shortly after the destruction of Dresden, a man had appeared at Dr. Weidner's Sanatorium who was to play a certain role in the last period of Hauptmann's life. Paul M. had been employed as a medical masseur in a military hospital at the main Dresden railroad station. After the catastrophe he placed himself at the disposal of the sanatorium, whose proprietor he had known for years. One of his first duties was to give massages to Hauptmann for his sciatica. In the course of the treatment, at which he was quite adept, his quick witted Berlin chitchat had had a noticeably cheering effect on the still morosely vegetating poet.

When the plan for the return to Silesia came up, the management of the sanatorium asked the masseur whether he was willing to accompany the elderly Hauptmanns on the difficult and perhaps already dangerous trip to Wiesenstein and then stay on there as attendant. Paul, who was a bachelor, agreed to do so.

But the matter was not arranged quite so simply. The masseur was subject to military service; he needed official permission to leave Dresden.

When this was finally procured, Hauptmann had a new attack of sciatica. Later, an automobile was supposed to be made available by the army. This plan miscarried because of a fuel shortage.

Finally, the Red Army had advanced to the area around Lauban, where the troops of Field Marshal Schörner counter-attacked. As long as the

battle raged around Lauban, there was no possibility of reaching the Riesengebirge by rail. But Hauptmann persisted in his desire. He wanted to be in his home on the day of inevitable catastrophe for Germany. "Come what may—even the worst misfortune cannot frighten me."

One wonders if he was aware at that moment that with his decision to join his own fate to that of Silesia, he was accepting a role of historical significance.

His friends in his homeland and his fellow-citizens of Agnetendorf no longer believed that he would return. Whether they blamed or defended him, they were all convinced that after the destruction of Dresden the old couple had gone to South Germany, as rumor had it.

During this time C. F. W. Behl was preparing for his own departure. In our last telephone conversation he told me that part of Hauptmann's papers would be taken to Franconia with governmental assistance.

I asked him if he still considered Hauptmann's return a possibility. We two knew positively that he was still at Oberloschwitz.

Behl said nothing for a long time. Then I heard his hesitant words: "Do *you* consider it possible? I don't—not now . . ."

Meanwhile the Battle of Lauban was over and the Red Army driven back more than thirty miles. The temporarily disrupted train service on the line from Görlitz through Lauban to Hirschberg was renewed.

When this news became known in Oberloschwitz, Hauptmann declared: "If no automobile can be obtained, I'll leave tomorrow by train."

And that is what happened. On March 20, 1945, five weeks after the destruction of Dresden, the Hauptmanns, accompanied by Anni, the secretary, and Paul, the attendant, left the ruined city.

Before four o'clock in the morning an army ambulance picked up Hauptmann and took him from Oberloschwitz to the Neustädter Station, which had been repaired sufficiently to function on an emergency basis. The ambulance attendants carried the old man on a litter through the crowds of people up to the train. Paul had arranged everything carefully: transportation, compartment, luggage.

The trip passed without incident as far as Görlitz. There was a rather long delay there, and the travelers spent the time in the crowded waiting-room. Hauptmann was in good spirits. Unconcerned about the people, who curiously wandered past him, he put his arm on the table, laid his impressive head on it, and slept soundly in that position for a long time, like a peasant.

Around noon the train set out for Hirschberg. After fifteen minutes it stopped in the open country. Hour after hour dragged past. Rumors filled the cars. The Russians were said to be in Lauban again. Gerhart Hauptmann slept.

Ten hours later the train was ordered back to Görlitz. It had turned out that the damage to the railway system could not be repaired as rapidly as had been thought.

Around midnight the old man, leaning heavily on the arm of his

attendant, groped his way through the pitch-dark streets of the city until a hotel room was found.

The next morning Paul succeeded in getting an automobile. Again the army helped out by providing the gasoline and the permit to travel that was needed.

At noon they started their journey into the Riesengebirge, going by way of Reichenberg in Bohemia. At eight that evening the car rolled up the steep slope and through the gate at Wiesenstein.

A crowd of people from the village quickly assembled. They were beside themselves with joy. The news spread rapidly through the villages and towns of the Riesengebirge. Even the isolated men on the *Schneekoppe** learned it that very evening.

Never was Gerhart Hauptmann more fervently loved by the people of his homeland than in those days of fear and uncertainty . . .

What everyone felt vaguely, the defender of Breslau, General Niehoff, was quite clearly aware of: If the relief force that had been promised him repeatedly did not appear, then the city, which was restraining the main body of the Red Army, could no longer be held. And then Silesia would be lost.

While the general dispatched message after message by radio to the High Command, Hauptmann once again, at long last, slept his accustomed "lumberjack's sleep" in the top tower room at Wiesenstein.

*Highest mountain in the Riesengebirge (c. 5300 ft.) not far from Wiesenstein.

2 Wiesenstein

"Do come soon!" I heard Margarete's voice, vigorous once more, over the telephone. "Gerhart has said that we will remain at Wiesenstein, to live here and if necessary—to die here . . ."

How I was tempted by the invitation of my honored friends! I would have liked to set out immediately and travel the twelve miles from Wolfshau to Agnetendorf—on foot, if necessary. But I was no longer a free agent. I had been made a member of the auxiliary police force, and I needed permission to leave my station at Krummhübel.

I served, it was true, only every third day, my duties consisting mostly of patrolling the district. Two of us would go out together, armed with pistols or old Italian rifles. Occasionally there was some serious shooting, when we came upon looters or deserters at night in the unoccupied houses. The deserters had taken refuge in the mountains, where all was quiet again, and were invariably armed.

In the middle of February the evacuation of the Hirschberg district had been ordered. Things had not gone as smoothly as they once had. The people did not want to leave home. The Party* functionaries, who had been accustomed for twelve years to the unquestioning obedience of most Germans, were disconcerted at the resistance. The local Party leader at Krummhübel roared: "I'll drive you people out of your houses with whips!" By employing the police force ruthlessly, he finally succeeded in evacuating at least the local women and a number of the smaller children, along with the people who had been bombed out of West Germany and the refugees from East Prussia, Posen, and eastern Upper Silesia. The Foreign Office, which had maintained a large section in Krummhübel, had also evacuated all its employees and their families by special train.

The empty houses, often located in isolated spots in the mountains, attracted the human flotsam of war: runaway soldiers, men of the

*The National Socialist (Nazi) Party.

militia, legionaries from Vlassov's army, foreign workers, and prisoners from the concentration camps. They all wanted to "live through the last round," as one of them said after his arrest, and they fired on the police patrols. Civil order no longer really existed. To my surprise, our group leader gave me permission to be absent for a while and said: "Well, say hello to dear old Gerhart for me! And tell him to get well soon! Why, he's as much a part of our mountains as Rûbezah! . . ."*

The words of this simple man—he was a saddler by trade—reflected the mood of the people of Silesia. They were a sign of Hauptmann's true fame. Reflected in them was a bit of the old superstitious belief in the mysterious powers of the old man, who had voluntarily returned to the endangered land of his fathers.

After a short drive to Hermsdorf, I was walking along the pretty footpath that goes through the woods and along a stream to Agnetendorf, when a man came out of a dark thicket and walked up to me. He was unshaven and wore a shabby jacket that was much too big for his lean figure. Embarrassed and yet at the same time defiant, he asked in broken German for a bread stamp. I gave him one. He thanked me briefly and disappeared. Disturbed, I continued on my way.

Before me in the bright sunshine of the early spring day lay mighty Wiesenstein, its walls over a yard thick, like a castle with gable and terrace on one side and a citadel protected by a tower on the other.

How could it have occurred to me that this house of the spirit was destined soon afterward to become a sort of private fortress! The handsome main entrance, for example, which was immediately opened in response to my ring, later was regularly barricaded from the inside by beams placed across it and propped up against it. But on the morning of my arrival the usual solemn stillness prevailed in the broad, high hall with its splendidly colorful frescoes by Johannes Avenarius, representing figures from Hauptmann's works.

Paradise Hall, so called because of its fabulous splendor, was peculiarly cheerful. In the Old English fireplace birch logs were burning, casting a pale pink glow on the blue and white flowered pattern of the arm-chairs in front of it.

From the upper gallery the huge bust of Goethe by David d'Angers peered down. Along the high windows hung the artistically carved wooden ship models—the Hanseatic pirate ship, the Chinese junk, the caravel of Christopher Columbus. Hauptmann called them "poet's wings—for setting out on the pathless sea of fantasy." And there was my favorite in the rich art collection of Wiesenstein: the life-sized Florentine Angel of the Annunciation with its calm and simple piety, which was to stand watch at Hauptmann's coffin fifteen months later. And on everything lay the light of spring. Only the master of the house was missing.

*Rûbezah! a legendary mountain spirit who is supposed to inhabit the Riesengebirge, playing tricks on the people, but usually more benevolent than otherwise.

Formerly he had always appeared first—sometimes in a frockcoat, which was adorned on especially solemn occasions with the order *Pour le mérite*, but usually in a sport suit with knickerbockers. A man of medium height but with a large, impressive head, he had a unique way of entering the hall and walking up to his visitors in a free and easy manner, his hand extended in greeting. The firm handshake with its human warmth and the welcoming attitude that pervaded the whole man, without any hint of the theatrical about it, were irresistibly genuine. One was under the spell of the old magician, under the protection of the fatherly friend. To be a guest at Wiesenstein was to feel at home. On this morning late in March, instead of the powerful figure of the poet, that of his small, shy, and rather delicate secretary entered the hall.

"Hello, Anni, how is everything?"

She smiled quietly. "We are happy to be in Agnetendorf again. But unfortunately, from the standpoint of health, one could wish for an improvement."

"Well, now! What's the matter with you? A lady so charmingly young should not be sick."

Anni blushed. It gave her grayish-yellow complexion a healthier glow. "Oh, I meant Dr. Hauptmann," she said softly and reprovingly as we went up the stairs together to the top floor.

At the landing Margarete greeted me. She wore a simple, black dress, and her short, silver-white hair shimmered in the bright light.

"I'm glad it was possible for you to come," she said.

"I wanted very much to see the two of you again after the inferno of Dresden."

Margarete Hauptmann immediately became serious. And she looked as though she were wearing a mask—a stern and impenetrable one—Japanese, many of her friends said. "It certainly was an inferno—with two hundred and sixty-five thousand dead people," she said softly.

Thank goodness, later figures were to show that there were "only" around thirty thousand fatalities. The exaggerated figures mentioned at that time showed the agitation of even such thoughtful people as Margarete.

"Come, old friend. Gerhart is looking forward to your visit. He is gathering his friends around him. After all that inhumanity he craves human beings—people, people, people . . ."

When we were in front of the door of the Biedermeier room, which was to become Hauptmann's regular living room until his death, Mrs. Hauptmann said softly:

"Let's not overtax his strength. You know that he's not well. When he gets tired, let's stop and let him sleep a little first. And then—you'll just have to make do with me," she added with a sweet smile.

"People—people—people . . ."

The repetition of that one word—as if it were an incantation—was

*The German word is *Menschen*, literally "human beings," which has a less cold and impersonal connotation than the English "people."

the first thing that Gerhart Hauptmann uttered. It was an effort for him to speak.

He was sitting in the big, green easy-chair. His legs were wrapped in a blanket and resting on a second chair. As he stretched out both hands to me from this bed of pain and fixed his big, bright-blue eyes on me with an expression of sadness, I was shocked at the great change that had taken place in him.

Only three months before he had still been the familiar "Olympian" of his pictures. For his eighty-two years he had been unusually resilient and active. An elastic gait, quick movements, a firm handshake had been characteristic of him.

His handshake still had a virile firmness to it. But the appearance of the old man . . .

His head, still crowned with the beautiful white hair, looked like that of a bird as it projected from his brown sport jacket and scarf.

"It was God's will that I be compelled to witness the destruction of Dresden—the city that I loved more than any other."

The old man breathed out the sentence, hesitating even between parts of the same word. He seemed crushed to the very depths of his soul.

"The damned shelter is to blame," he cried angrily and pointed at the upper part of his thighs, where the sciatica was.

"I was warned repeatedly, by a dream," he continued softly. "Well—be that as it may. Anyway, peacock feathers are supposed to bring misfortune. I had this dream—oh, it was . . ."

He looked over at his wife for help. "It was in the spring, two years ago, that you first dreamt it," she replied from her seat by the window, completing his thought with great alertness.

"At that time I immediately told our good Doctor Behl about the dream," said the old man, beginning anew. "I was sitting in a hall-like room that reminded me partly of Hohenhaus and partly of Wiesenstein. Gretchen here was sitting beside me. Suddenly a peacock feather grew out of my mouth, like the paper snakes that children like to blow up. Well—I don't believe I'll die because of this peacock feather. But still—in the unsuccessful first performance of *Florian Geyer*, Emmanuel Richter inadvertently wore a peacock feather in his helmet instead of an ostrich feather . . ."

Margarete, who had been called to the telephone in the meantime, now returned to the breakfast room, whose bright cherry-wood furniture in the Biedermeier style had belonged to Hauptmann's mother.

It had an aura of hominess, this simple and yet refined bourgeois furniture. It seemed to do the sick man good. "Two men from the *Gauleiter's** office called. They said it was urgent that they speak to you. If you want to receive them . . . I asked them to tea, unless we let them know otherwise."

Gerhart Hauptmann shook his head wearily. "If they don't come

*Official under National Socialism who was in charge of a district about the size of an American county.

today, they'll be here tomorrow. I can't help myself: I'm just the shadow of my former self . . ."

And stimulated by the bright furniture from an epoch of German history now past, he began to talk about the great period at Wiesenstein. He spoke softly and only with great effort. But his mind was still powerful—with the peculiar luminous quality of rotting wood.

When talking finally became too difficult for him, his wife took up the thread of the conversation where he let it drop, as though it were the most natural thing in the world. And so we talked a long time about the great moments that this house had seen.

How many and how varied had been the visitors to Wiesenstein! There had been men representing the arts and the sciences, politics, business and industry, some that were world-famous and others less well known—Germans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians, Scandinavians, Americans, men from India and from Japan. From all the corners of the world they had come to Agnetendorf. And this quiet little settlement of workers in glass and wood with its scant thousand inhabitants had become world-famous because of Gerhart Hauptmann.

Great names were mentioned in our conversation—the poets Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Franz Werfel, the composer Eugen D'Albert, the painters Leo von König and Käthe Kollwitz.

And we spoke of those famous musical evenings which every friend and acquaintance of the Hauptmanns longed to attend some time. A small, select group would gather in the drawing-room on the first floor, with its massive Dutch furniture. (It was so bulky that it had to be left behind, later, during the hasty departure.) After inspecting the magnificent display of original paintings by great masters that hung on the walls, the de luxe editions of Hauptmann's works in the glass display case, and the medals and documents honoring the poet, the guests would be seated.

Professor Heinrich Grünfeld tuned his beloved cello. Mrs. Berg, wife of the highly gifted city architect who built the Jahrhundert Hall in Breslau, took her place at the grand piano. Margarete and a Silesian orchestra conductor raised their violins. Hers was the genuine Stradivarius that Hauptmann had given her.

Then some wonderful music playing began. Each member of this impromptu quartet did his best to hold his own with the others and at the same time to create the perfect tonal image that the composer had had in mind.

In front of the four musicians sat four auditors. One was the novelist Georg Engel, who recorded the events of this particular evening. A second was the administrative director of Count Schaffgott's estates. This elegant, practical-minded man with the mutton-chop whiskers that were the style at that time, seemed transported by the music. The last two

members of the quartet of auditors were the fellow-Silesians and fellow-poets Gerhart Hauptmann and Hermann Stehr. While the former village schoolmaster Stehr sat modestly withdrawn in a corner and closed his eyes and let his iron-grey head sink on his breast, the master of the house, on fire with the irresistible appeal of the music, sat on a chair placed quite close to the musicians.

His hands were clasped around his knees. His head, with the hair still greyish-blond, was bent backwards. His light-blue eyes stared up at the vault of the ceiling, as though the musical sounds were agile, little ships that were carrying his own thoughts out on the high seas of the world of the spirit.

When the last tone had died away Gerhart Hauptmann rose. He embraced his Gretchen, kissed Mrs. Berg's hand, and shook hands with the two gentlemen. The poet was entranced with the artistry of the musicians. With a childlike charm he thanked them for the pleasure that their playing had given him.

Later there followed the supper in the wood-panelled dining room, which was like the private dining room of a luxury liner. During supper, too, the host retained the same unaffected modesty that was an intrinsic part of his nature.

These festivities of the spirit and of the senses belonged to the past. The old man, bent with sciatica, sighed gently from his green armchair.

"Oh, yes—Stehr, Professor Grünfeld, Georg Engel—how wonderfully well he described the concert! You, who witnessed my happy years—gone . . ."

Margarete gently contradicted the old man. "Several of them are still alive. The war has scattered them."

"How I hate it—the military profession, the clamor of war. Why, in my *Festspiel* in 1913 I wrote the words (and later crossed them out, I must admit): 'swords are degenerate plows and soldiers degenerate farmers.' Who would have understood me then? Who understands me today . . . ?"

He closed his eyes and seemed to doze. And we, too, were silent for a long time. Finally, Margarete signaled to me with her eyes. On tiptoe we left the sleeping Hauptmann alone.

When the gentlemen from the Gauleiter's office appeared at tea time, Hauptmann was noticeably rested. He was sitting in the green chair again and called for wine instead of tea. He himself drank Pjølter Cognac with soda . . . "It was Ibsen's favorite drink when he was an old man," he declared.

The caraffe with the Burgundy sparkled in front of the window. Soon the glasses were filled.

The gentlemen were seated. One was a stiff and formal academician;

the other was younger and more wiry. "A chatter-box," Hauptmann called him later, amused.

We drank to each other. "To your complete and speedy recovery, my dear Doctor," said the academician, sedately. I was greatly relieved. He had avoided any phrase that smacked of propaganda, such as the old man had so often rejected.

Some time before he had brusquely told a visitor, who was speaking of racial theories, that he could well imagine a happy marriage with a negress, at which the good man was thunderstruck.

But Hauptmann, who had long since killed off the politician in himself "with a hammer" (as he said), was not concerned with political opposition to National Socialism. He was annoyed by all ideological slogans, all inadmissible generalizations. Even a high official of the Party had found that out when Hauptmann spent a half hour with him praising to the skies Bebel, Rathenau, Briand, and Stresemann, those "memorable personalities."

I had feared a heated discussion, which would inevitably have been bad for the frail old man. But the visitors had tact. They had come, it was soon revealed, "on a special mission."

"You witnessed the catastrophic destruction of our German treasure house, the city of Dresden, my dear Doctor," the academician began anew.

Hauptmann nodded morosely.

The younger man took over the conversation and said bluntly, "Will you write something about it—a protest against the crime, an appeal to the civilized world, something like that . . . ?"

"No," the old man said, very softly. There was a long silence in the dimly-lit room.

"Why—but that would be . . ." The academician was beginning to speak again when Hauptmann interrupted him with a quick, assured gesture.

"I have already written my last word about Dresden. As the nature of the subject demanded—and my own nature, of course—it turned into a lamentation. Anni, be so kind . . ."

The secretary went away. We were silent. Then the light grew brighter in the twilight of the room. Anni handed Hauptmann a type-written page. With a certain ceremoniousness he took his glasses out of the breast pocket of his jacket. But before opening them he passed the sheet of paper over to me.

"You have so often been kind enough to read my writings aloud for the first time in our little circle," he said with an old-fashioned amiability that was charming and disarming at the same time.

I read the *Lament for Dresden* aloud. The words resounded in the room like the tolling of a bell.

When I came to the final paragraph: "I am nearly eighty-three years old and stand before God with a last request, which is unfortunately without force and comes only from the heart: it is the prayer that God

should love and purify and refine mankind more than heretofore—for their own salvation.” —my voice grew faint. I felt the breath of eternity . . .

The gentlemen from the Gauleiter's office also seemed affected by it. They were silent a long time. Then the academician said, “A masterpiece.” And the younger man said enthusiastically, “It surpasses our fondest expectations . . .”

In the course of further conversation it became clear what they had in mind: Gerhart Hauptmann's lament was to be disseminated by all the German press and all the radio stations not yet in the hands of the enemy.

I confess that the idea made me uncomfortable. Here it was March 29, 1945. Two-thirds of Germany were occupied by her military foes. If the destruction of Dresden had taken place at the wish or with the approval of the Soviet High Command, as the London radio had claimed—their armies were rolling nearer and nearer to the Riesenbirge . . . What would happen if the Soviet commander, whose troops would be occupying Agnetendorf some day in the not too distant future, had been annoyed by the broadcast, and using Soviet ideological slogans, which are just as devastating as those of the National Socialists, were to declare the feeble old man a “Fascist”?

While I was still reflecting on these unpleasant possibilities, Gerhart Hauptmann handed the sheet of paper to the gentlemen with apparent unconcern. “These are my last words about Dresden. Please understand me correctly. Not a word is to be changed, added, or deleted!”

The gentlemen agreed most definitely to this stipulation and took their leave after we had talked a little longer. Their wishes for the complete and speedy recovery of “our Silesian genius”—those were their words—were expressed with a very marked heartiness.

The old man smiled slyly from his green chair. “I think I'll go on knitting my stocking for a while yet.”

His bold action seemed questionable enough to me, in view of the possible consequences.

Paul, the attendant, returned in the evening from Hirschberg, where he had gone to get medicine for his patient. After the Hauptmanns had gone to bed early, I sat for a while with Anni and him in a guest room on the third floor.

Paul had met an acquaintance who was radioman for an army staff group. The report of the situation in Fortress Breslau was crushing.

The Russians had taken the southern suburbs almost as far as the main depot. Kleinburg and Gräbschen were said to be nothing but ruins almost up to Garten Street. From the north they were close to the Ring. The eastern part was also occupied. Only Scheitnig and the center of the city were still in German hands. The condition of soldiers and civilians was said to be frightful: for days there had been no electricity, no gas, no water. Fires raged almost unhindered. Only the provision of food was being taken care of to a limited extent. “If the relief that has been

asked for and promised over and over again doesn't appear, it's all over in Breslau," the radioman had told Paul.

And our fate in the Hirschberg valley depended upon Breslau. It was true that Schörner's troops, stationed along the mountain range, had beaten back an advance group of the Red Army at Lauban. But how could they resist the main body, which was still being held at Breslau? The fate of the Riesengebirge seemed sealed.

I slept little that night. I thought of my homeland, of my family, of the helpless old Hauptmanns downstairs, and of Wiesenstein, their peerless home, only a very small part of whose treasures C. F. W. Behl had after all, been able to save. What still remained here was of inestimable value to scholars, to the German people, and to the Hauptmann family.

I felt it was fortunate that Paul was in the house. There was no doubt that his personality did not harmonize with the Hauptmanns. But that seemed to me a matter of minor importance, in view of the situation in which the elderly couple found themselves. His manual dexterity helped Hauptmann's sciatica. His adaptability was precisely the right quality for the dark days that were coming . . .

My mind more at ease, I fell into a light sleep. And in my dream I saw Wiesenstein again in the festive days of its glory . . .

There was a family celebration with a small group of friends, of whom I was one. It blended with other festivities, those organized on the spur of the moment always being the best. In my dream I recognized the Behls, Erich Ebermeyer, Count Richthofen and Count York and their wives. Standing bent over the grand piano was the Countess York von Wartenburg, the still beautiful actress Else Eckersberg, who had become famous for her thrilling performance as Hannele. At the piano sat the Countess Richthofen, who was a well-known opera singer under her Swedish maiden name, Sigrid Johannsen. To her own accompaniment she was singing a colorful, passionate medley of French, Italian, English, and American popular songs. And then Mrs. Eckersberg gave hilarious imitations of famous personalities of stage and film.

During a pause Hauptmann said, "How narrow our life here really is and how many other colorful worlds are hinted at by what we have just seen and heard!"

This was during the days of the final battle for Stalingrad. The violent course of events there was present in the back of all our minds, like a dark shadow. The last and most brutal epoch of control by National Socialism, characterized by the *Blockleiter*,* had begun in Germany. Hauptmann sighed gently in the midst of all the gaiety.

At an advanced hour, he himself began to speak . . . His beautiful

*Party official under National Socialism, a major part of whose function was informing on "unreliable" elements in the houses under his supervision.

hands flat on the table in front of him, he called up before us in a few sentences figures from his varied past that were long since dead or gone.

Rudolf G. Binding greeted us pleasantly, took a seat in our circle, and spoke fascinatingly about the long-ago times when he was still an officer in the Hussars "on the backs of the horses" and when he was a globetrotter . . .

Hauptmann raised his fragile Parisian champagne glass, watched the play of the bubbles thoughtfully, took a deep swallow, and followed it with a peasant-like "ahhh." And then he continued speaking, this time about Alexander Moissi. We were immediately aware of this actor's characteristics. As though carried away, he leaned on the thick, dark curtains and sang the role of Fedya (in Tolstoy's *Living Corpse*) in a hysterical falsetto.

Then came Albert Bassermann—the colossus that he was in the prime of life, with his "gravelly" voice, which reproduced every word of his role with such artistry and at the same time with such depths of vitality that even the dullest members of the audience were affected by it . . . The old Hauptmann was on fire with his own words. "You should have seen Rudolf Rittner—as Drayman Henschel, for example," he cried.

And the great Silesian actor, who had surprised everyone by leaving the stage and was leading a life of retirement on his brother's country estate, stood before us.

"It was I who first showed Rittner how to walk," said Hauptmann. "By then he had forgotten life in the country. He no longer knew the heavy drayman's gait. But when I had walked for him as Henschel would walk, Rittner did it wonderfully . . ." And we saw the unhappy coachman with his heavy, dragging, fatalistic gait swaying through the festively illuminated Wiesenstein . . .

Suddenly Hauptmann yawned and got up. How wonderfully resilient he still was, despite the late hour. It was after three by then. "I'm going to look at the stars," he said with a gay twinkle in his eyes and went out alone into the park.

After a while he returned with a flat box. "Let this be the conclusion to our session today—a little trip to Greece, the eternal."

The old man raised the lid. There lay the ancient gold and silver coins from Athens, Corinth, Samothrace, Rhodes, and Sicily, that he had collected. Absorbed by their magical appearance, he told us the most marvelous and the strangest things about the infinitely rich, demonic life of antiquity . . .

When I went down to breakfast the next morning, the door to the Biedermeier room was open. And the door to the adjoining tower room, in which Hauptmann now regularly slept, was also open. I entered the room.

The old man lay on the ottoman in a deep sleep. His head was bent forward and to one side. His cheeks were flushed with sleep, and that made his face look fuller and younger.

Sleeping there, he seemed neither sick nor particularly old. He was like a figure of Poseidon, resting after the wild festivities of life—the picture of victorious vitality, of indestructible fame. How very true was his jest about the “stocking,” which he would certainly go on knitting a while yet!

When I had silently left the room and stood in the hall again, I heard the distant rumbling of artillery for the first time. The Red Army was now scarcely forty miles from Agnetendorf.

At breakfast Anni said that the *Lament for Dresden* had already been broadcast. The morning paper also had it. I listened to the distant rumbling. I did not feel very cheerful.

Later I spoke with Gerhart Hauptmann for a long time. He felt quite chipper. He did not seem to notice the sinister rumbling outside.

“We must not lose faith—I mean the proverbial faith that moves mountains,” he said. “Every war is a trial by God. Just look at German history!”

He spoke about the Thirty Years’ War, weighing his words carefully. “The greater the distress was, the more purely and the more ardently did the German spirit glow; and it still has much in store for us Germans to do and certainly also for others . . .”

Looking into the dark and uncertain future, he concluded softly, “For my part I’ll stick by my household motto: *Ex corde lux*—‘light from the heart’ . . . It has always helped me along.”

When I left, Margarete and I agreed to remain in close touch with each other.

“Perhaps we will still be surprised—I mean pleasantly, of course,” she said in jest, seemingly composed.

“I’ll count on that . . .”

But neither of us believed what we were saying.

Breslau was about to fall. The Gauleiter of Silesia had fled from his “fortress” by plane. He landed in Hirschberg, spent the night there, and then disappeared dressed in the uniform of a private. It was said that he committed suicide a little later in a village in Saxony.

Schörner’s troops were still stationed along the mountain range. Part way up the mountains heavy artillery was being installed. The militia, auxiliary police, and civilians were employed to construct tank barricades.

We could still hear the rumbling of the artillery at Liegnitz; it was silent for one day and then started up again. Fantastic rumors kept everyone in suspense. According to one, the Red Army was advancing

towards the mountains for a major attack; another claimed that a powerful German army was marching up from Bohemia. And everyone knew definitely that tomorrow, without fail tomorrow morning, the decisive battle would begin . . .

From Wiesenstein came varied reports. The state of Hauptmann's health wavered. He had a slight lung inflammation, which Dr. Münch from the hospital at Bad Warmbrunn treated and quickly cured. When I visited Agnetendorf again just before the surrender, Hauptmann seemed in extremely good spirits. He was working again on his long novel, *Der neue Christophorus* (THE NEW ST. CHRISTOPHER), which he was not destined to finish, despite the fact that he kept working on it almost until the last day of his life.

Our conversations during this visit dealt largely with Jakob Böhme. Hauptmann had been reading in his *Unio mystica* again during the last few weeks. About him there was already the calm of the great transition.

Once, as he was talking about the "threefold life of man" with wonderful intensity, Hitler's death was announced on the radio. The old man paused a moment, exhaled deeply, and murmured: "The bloodiest phrasemonger in world history has gone out like a cheap candle." Not a word more. He returned immediately to the threefold life of man.

After Hitler's suicide it became uncannily quiet in the Riesengebirge. The distant rumbling of artillery had died away. The artillery pieces that had already been installed in the mountains were hauled away. Refugees no longer poured through the valleys. An unprecedented paralysis had seized the Riesengebirge, which were bright with the sunlight of early summer.

On May 8 the unconditional surrender was made known. The next morning the Red Army pulled into Krummhübel in good order in various detached military columns.

The sight of these people, well-nourished and quite rested four weeks after the fall of Breslau, was crushing—and at the same time a little comical. Only the light armor of the advance guard still reminded one of war. The rest of the soldiers rolled along in Canadian trucks, American jeeps, or the simple but reliable vehicles made in Russia. They perched up there in colorful confusion, smoking cigarettes and playing balalaikas or harmonicas. A few had requisitioned old farm carriages and horses and came riding comfortably along the mountain highway. The main body came on foot. They all wore medals; some had several long bands of them, one below the other. Most of them were pushing bicycles along. Among them were women in uniform. Everyone was in a relaxed mood.

That very afternoon the situation became dangerous for the Germans. The Soviet soldiers had found alcohol in the cellars of the hotel. They went around howling and shooting, collected wrist watches and pocket watches, the best as well as the cheapest, and began to molest the women and girls, who had soon disappeared from the streets and the fields and

the houses. The next day the main body of the army had gone on over the passes into Czechoslovakia. Only a relatively weak garrison of occupation troops had remained in the Hirschberg district. We could breathe again . . .

Then the report reached me that Gerhart Hauptmann had left Wiesenstein and had been hospitably received at Polaun, on the Czecho-German border near Schreiberhau—by the Americans.

I immediately put through a telephone call to Agnetendorf. That is, I tried to—but the current was shut off.

Since I could not leave Krummhübel myself—for reasons that still remain to be told—I sent a fourteen-year-old boy to Agnetendorf. He disappeared on the lonely forest path and was back eight hours later without having encountered a soul on the way. His report freed us from great anxiety:

Gerhart Hauptmann was at Wiesenstein with his wife and the staff. His condition was satisfactory. So far, no Russian had set foot in the house . . .

3 New Masters

Shortly before the collapse, new community councils had been formed in many towns and villages in the Riesengebirge. Krummhübel also, at a stormy public meeting, had given itself a new administration. It was to consist of one representative for each part of town. I was the delegate to the council for the district of Wolfshau.

When the Red Army marched into town the six members of the group gathered in the city hall: an elderly farmer, who had been burgomaster for a time during the Weimar Republic, a former trade union secretary, a sawmill worker, the owner of a delicatessen, an innkeeper, and myself. We had a white flag raised, sent the employees home, and waited.

Soon there appeared a Soviet major, a broad-shouldered man in his forties, who wore two long rows of medals on his field uniform. He was accompanied by a young interpreter and three heavily-armed soldiers. The major addressed us imperiously: "Where is the burgomaster?"

The farmer answered calmly, "He was dismissed by a town meeting the day before yesterday."

The interpreter translated. The major, sucking on his long Russian cigarette, looked suspiciously from one to the other of us as we stood in a row before him. Then he barked out a short sentence in Russian.

"The major asks if the German men here are anti-Fascists."

"We were opposed to Hitler," the farmer answered simply.

Again the major spoke a few words. "Why aren't they dead then—the major asks."

Then the old farmer smiled craftily. "You've just got to be lucky. And then, too—be sort of sly . . ."

The answer was so candid that the major was now smiling, too. In the same moment the interpreter became more friendly, and the soldiers in the background shouldered their machine pistols, which they had so far held ready for use.

Then the major gave a short speech which he had apparently given

many times before. In any case, he rattled it off as though he were reading it.

It dealt with our duties and obligations: turning over to them all the weapons, radios, and cameras in town; providing the inhabitants with food; reporting all "Fascistic criminals, terrorists, and deviationists . . ." It also dealt with the severe punishment in case we acted otherwise.

In conclusion we were ordered to appear the next morning at "nine on the dot" at the new command post in Hirschberg. The major gave us a brief military bow, turned on his heel, and left. The interpreter and the soldiers followed him. The whole scene was decidedly—Prussian.

Soon after, a captain appeared with a bundle of printed proclamations. "To be posted—everywhere and where they'll be seen by *everyone* . . .," he said hurriedly and disappeared.

One proclamation, printed in Russian and German, consisted of the orders of the occupying authorities to the people. They corresponded almost word for word to the major's speech. Printed on the other set of posters was the following sentence, which impressed us, since at that time we did not yet know the Soviet methods of control:

*The Hitlers come and go—
the German people and the German
state will remain. —Stalin*

It would have been impossible to mistake the command post in Hirschberg.

The medium-sized office building was decorated like an oriental circus tent. A picture of Stalin at least ten square yards in size was flanked by two smaller but still gigantic pictures of Soviet generals. Above them were broad, red bands with inscriptions and red flags with the hammer and sickle.

The two guards at the entrance lowered their machine pistols and said quietly, "*Stoi!*" (Halt).

We explained that we had been told to come here. The answer was a bored "*Stoi.*" Finally a well-built girl in uniform appeared and took us to the Commandant.

Colonel Smirnov sat on the podium of the little council chamber behind a table draped in red. The wall behind him was again decorated with a picture of Stalin, smaller but in better taste than the one like a billboard that we had seen on the front of the building. The Generalissimo in his natty uniform looked down sternly from the picture. His subordinate, the new commander of the Silesian district capital, looked at us with all the greater friendliness.

Silently he indicated some empty seats in the chamber. We sat down beside the representatives of other communities. The major who had

spoken to us in Krummhübel, a captain, two first lieutenants, the interpreter, and the well-built girl took their places on the podium.

The Commandant opened the meeting. In a few sentences he expounded the plan for the next few weeks. He demanded that work be resumed in the workshops and factories. The question as to their being taken over by the state, which a German Communist immediately asked, was answered evasively: "It is a question now of work and bread for everybody. Further developments will be made clear in another plan, which we will initiate."

This plan involved—as we were soon to find out—the complete dismantling of the most important factories. After that, there was no further talk about "work and bread" for the Silesians.

Finally Colonel Smirnov urged the burgomasters to present their own problems. For a long time a timid silence prevailed in the little chamber. At last someone said, "What is to become of all the foreigners? They are looting in the villages."

"Looters are to be reported immediately," answered the Commandant. "Moreover, all foreigners will be repatriated. The communities are to give them decent quarters and sufficient food, for which they will be recompensed by us."

All that sounded quite plausible—entirely reasonable, in fact . . . No hint of violence could be detected. And yet in the neighboring districts indescribable atrocities had been committed by Soviet soldiers. Had they been from other units? Or had the surrender really put an end to the war? We were groping in the dark, and besides, we were simple-minded enough to believe the Commandant's words.

And so, when we were discussing the food situation, we were quite frank about the grain supplies and their location. The captain made a note of them. The next day they were carted away—for the occupation forces. The specter of privation appeared in the Riesengebirge.

Finally the Commandant ordered the representatives from the various communities to come forward by groups. When it was the turn of our group from Krummhübel, the interpreter asked us to give our names—"also political party and occupation."

We did as we were told. When I gave my name and added, "no party affiliation—writer," the interpreter, a young man with an intelligent face (it later turned out that he was a student of German philology), hesitated a moment and then asked for my name again. Then he said, "You have written for the Soviet Union . . ."

"No," I answered. "But in 1930 translations of my stories appeared in Moscow and Minsk." And I gave the Russian titles and magazines.

The colonel had listened with interest. "Are there other creators of culture in the Hirschberg district?" he asked. That was when I heard the Soviet "magic phrase" for the first time: "creators of culture."

"Oh, yes—several, including some very important ones . . ." And I mentioned, first of all—Gerhart Hauptmann.

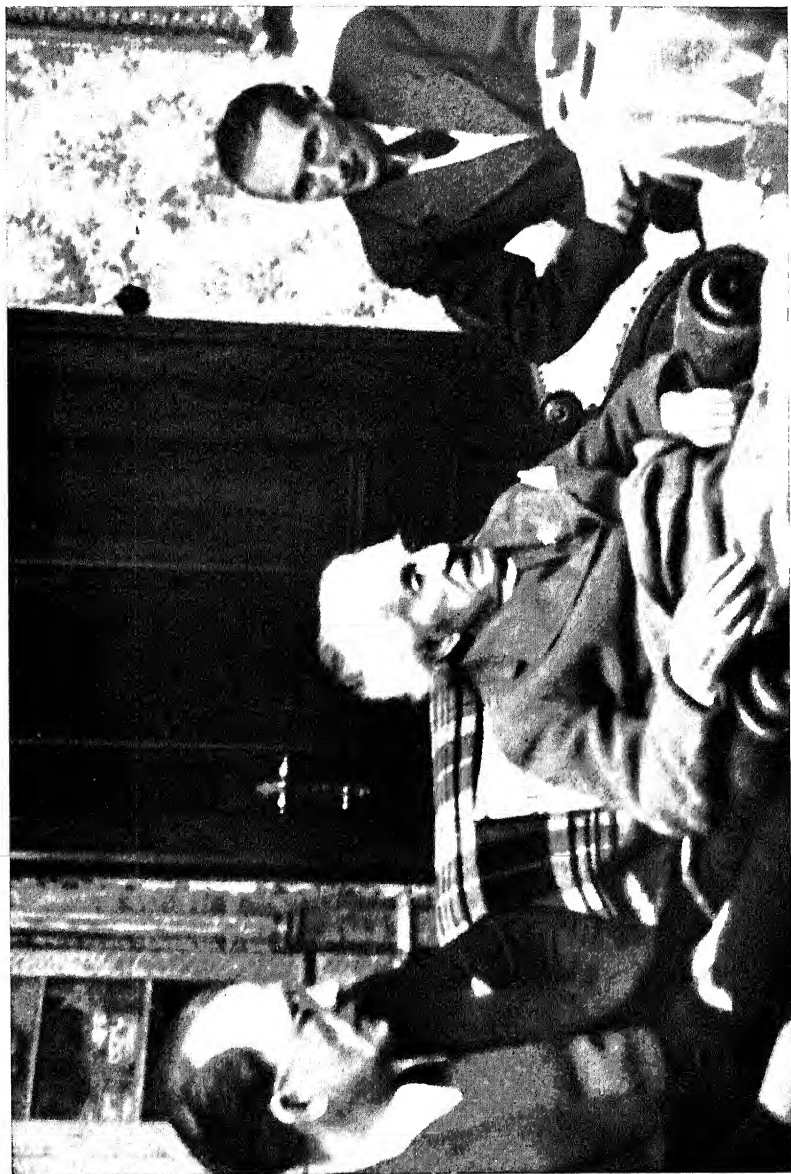
The officers at the table draped in red looked at each other.



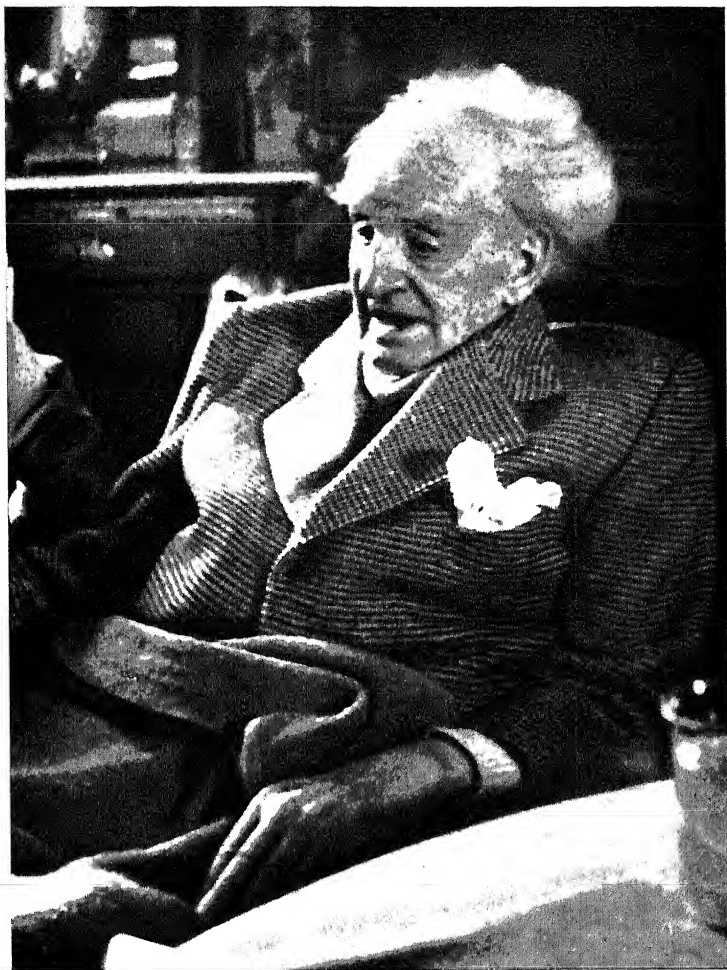
Gerhart Hauptmann on his eightieth birthday in Berlin (1942)



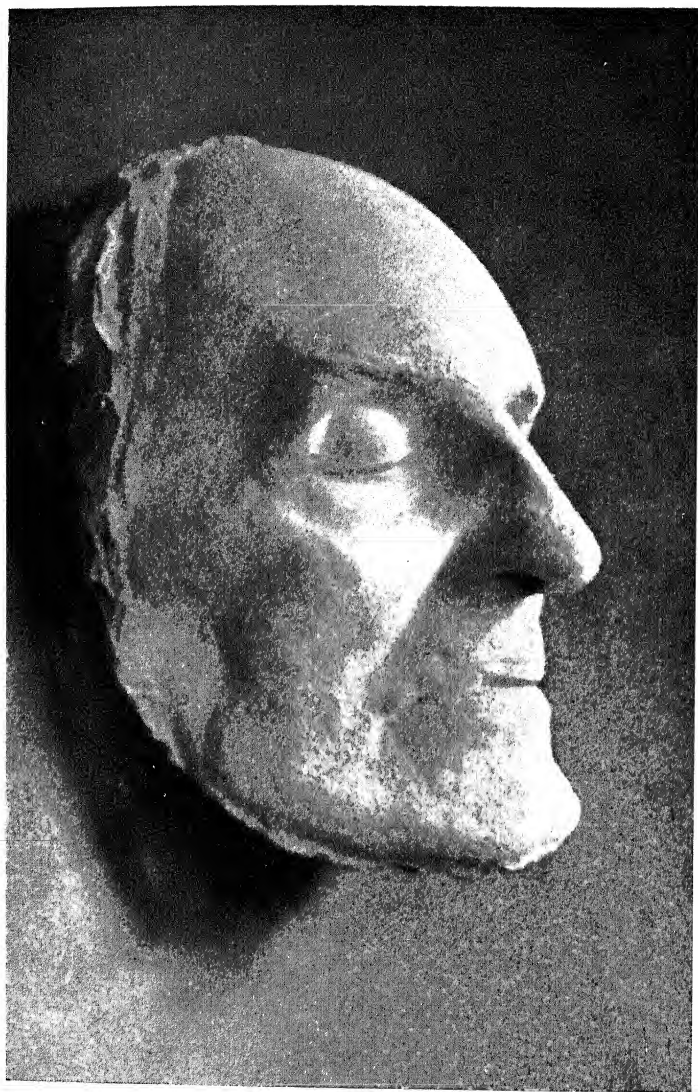
The last photograph of Gerhart Hauptmann and his wife (April 7, 1946)



Gerhart Hauptmann with Gerhart Pohl and Paul, the attendant



Gerhart Hauptmann, taken during the last days of his life



Death mask of Gerhart Hauptmann

"Hauptmann, the author of *Die Weber!*!" the Colonel cried in surprise. "Oh, I read his works in school—great man, very good poet and humanist! But old, no doubt—very old . . . I thought he was already—a classic writer . . ."

That was his polite circumlocution for the word "dead."

I pointed out to the Commandant that Gerhart Hauptmann was sick and defenseless. "He doesn't even have a telephone that works."

The colonel talked to his officers a while. Then he said, indicating the major, "Comrade Kalashnikov will take care of the matter . . ."

As a matter of fact, I visited Wiesenstein the very next morning. And Paul was using the telephone. He told me about the first Russian visitor to Gerhart Hauptmann.

"Up the garden path—it was in the afternoon—comes a Russki in uniform—an awfully young fellow with a milk-white face and a spick and span uniform. He rings the bell and asks quietly if he may visit the poet—just for a minute . . ."

Sitting in his green leather chair and nodding majestically, the old man received the lieutenant. He made a deep bow and remained standing at the door.

"Oh, you are sick, old gentleman!" he cried. "I not disturb you . . ." Hauptmann, with the unerring instinct of the fisher of men, detected genuine sympathy in his words.

"Come in, my dear lieutenant."

He accompanied his words with a gesture of invitation. The lieutenant tiptoed closer to the old man. Paul pushed out a chair for him. The Russian sat on it timidly and was silent.

"You are the representative of a powerful people who have accomplished great things in the realm of the spirit," Hauptmann began softly. "I refer to the enigmatic mission and the martyrdom for mankind of a Tolstoy or a Gorki."

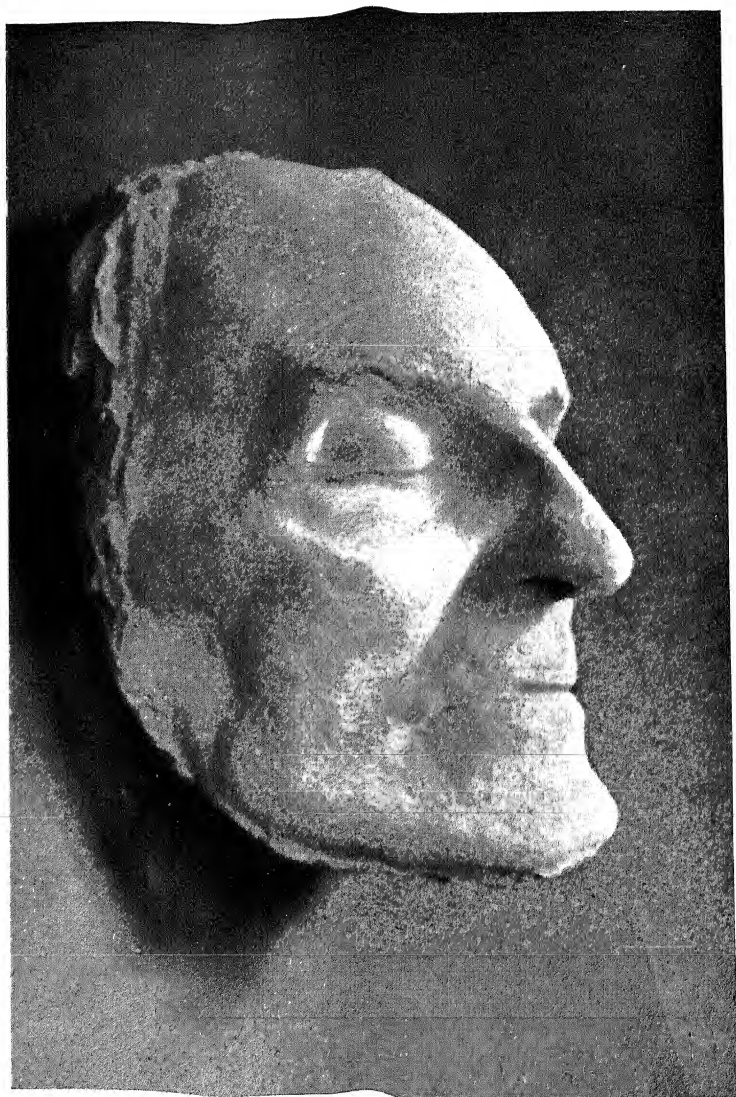
The velvety brown eyes of the young man were filled with astonished awe and respect. Finally he exhaled and said, "How good you know our classical writers!"

Then he began to speak of his love for Hauptmann's works, still a bit intimidated. Now it was the old man's turn to be astonished.

"What you have made there, great old man—the *Hanneles Himmelfahrt*. I can forget that never . . ."

And he began to recite in Russian the verses of the angel at the death bed of the tormented child.

The old man was touched and thanked him. Then he drank Cognac with his guest, who suddenly pulled a photograph of Hauptmann out of his pocket.



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"That I buyed in Bad Warmbrunn. The German man there in store tell me you live here. And I came running—very quickly . . ."

He held the photo out to Hauptmann.

"You sign it?" he asked, with the begging look of a child. "Those at home in Leningrad shall believe me, that I know you, great, old, so dear gentleman!" And he kissed the old man's hand and left.

Major Kalashnikov also appeared at Wiesenstein. Accompanying him was the provisional burgomaster of Agnetendorf.

The conversation was of a different sort. The Major was a soldier and a politician. His instructions were to protect Hauptmann and to provide for him as well as possible. Since he, also, knew German tolerably well (if he wanted to, and he wanted to only if the conversation promised to be pleasant), he had appeared without an interpreter.

"You will get bread, enough bread for everyone," he said. "Bread is always good for hunger. The farmers of these village will give milk and butter. Understand?" he asked the burgomaster, who was sitting at a suitable distance behind him and to one side. "Yes, *sir!*" cried the latter in a military manner.

"Well, then," said the Comrade Major, good-naturedly. "And the house, big as a tsar's chateau, is reserved for Hauptmann alone. Understand? No one will enter it—not even our soldiers."

When he learned of the first visitor he was annoyed. "Curious, stupid people—you toss 'em all out . . ." And he made the motions of taking a person by the collar to show Gerhart Hauptmann just what he meant.

The old man laughed. He was amused by the picture of himself taking a Red Army man, robust and armed, by the collar and tossing him out of the house. Then he said, "I like visitors, irrespective of nationality. That is—they must be human beings . . ."

The next foreign visitor to Wiesenstein was also a human being—the first Pole.

The attendant had become acquainted with him when visiting the district capital some time after the major's visit. Despite the promise of the Commandant's representative, food had not been delivered at first. The six people in Hauptmann's house were compelled to rely on the small-scale farmers of Agnetendorf, who produced very little food.

During this time the first Polish civilians had settled in the Riesengebirge. They had appeared like summer tourists at various farm houses and boarding houses.

"*Dzien dobry, panowi!* The burgomaster sends me. I am quartered with you . . ."

That was in accordance with the Commandant's orders, and the Germans accepted them without opposition.

Since the number of Poles arriving constantly increased and some of them acted like the masters in the homes of their hosts, the people had become ill-at-ease.

Everyone knew that most of the foreigners who had been obliged to work in Silesia had left long ago. The Russians, Ukrainians, White Russians, all citizens of the Soviet Union, had been rounded up in the various villages by soldiers of the occupation command, marched to Hirschberg, and from there taken to a collecting camp. The foreign workers and prisoners from the western countries had set out in small groups for Prague, by routes and at times determined by the Russian authorities, and from there they had been transported to Paris by air. Only the Poles remained.

When they began to abuse the hospitality of their German landlords and sell carpets, sewing machines, fur-pieces, and china that belonged to the latter for their own profit, the first conflicts took place.

The Germans complained to their burgomasters. A woman told how the Pole in her house, a coarse young fellow, had attempted to take her wedding ring from her finger and said as he did so, "Me—Polish Gestapo! Just wait, old German witch! Your turn will come, too: out on street and away—to Germany . . ."

This report was similar to others. Our burgomaster shook his head, a smallish head like that of the typical mountain dweller of the district: "You don't suppose that the Poles have convinced themselves that our Riesengebirge are—part of Poland . . ."

I showed him a 1944 copy of the *London Times* with a map of the boundary along the Oder that had been discussed at Yalta. Lower Silesia on the left bank of the Oder, including the Hirschberg district, was distinctly designated as part of Germany.

We decided to appeal to Colonel Smirnov and to consult our provisional *Landrat*.*

Since the Soviets had removed the modern electric trains, train service between Hirschberg and Krummhübel had temporarily ceased. As in the days of our grandfathers, the trip to the district capital was made by horse and carriage.

While the burgomaster and two members of the council went to see the Commandant, I went to the Landrat's office.

The Landrat greeted me in a friendly manner. His face was deeply furrowed with care.

"We have visitors here, many dear visitors," he said sarcastically. "Every day Poles arrive and find themselves work to do in the office."

*A district magistrate in charge of local administration.

I asked him why he put up with their presumption. After all, he was the Landrat who had been appointed by the Commandant.

"So far . . ."

His depression paralyzed me.

"Do you think it is possible that Silesia . . ." There I broke off and left the sentence unfinished. The thought that my homeland, which had been actually settled for the first time by Germans and cultivated by them for eight hundred years, should suddenly belong to Poland, was so grotesque, that I simply could not express it. Instead, I only asked what the Commandant thought of the activities of the Poles.

The Landrat smiled bitterly. "Smirnov assures me daily that everything will remain as it was. 'Poles—don't stay here. Here—Germany.'"

That was confirmed by our community representatives, who returned from the Commandant in a more cheerful state of mind.

While we were talking about the chances for the Germans to maintain their position in Silesia and about effective measures to combat the passion for mutual denunciation that afflicted many of our fellow-countrymen, Hauptmann's attendant appeared. I introduced him to those present.

"There may be some funny business going on here," he said excitedly in his Berlin accent. "I ask a man out there where I can find the Landrat, and what does he say? 'Do you want to see the Polish or the German Landrat?'"

We looked at one another. Then the Landrat informed us that there had been rumors the last few days that a *Starost** was to be appointed—for District 29. "I've no idea how they hit on that number—it doesn't exist in the Prussian administrative system."

When we investigated the matter, it turned out that there was no Starost in addition to the German Landrat, but there *was* a "Plenipotentiary for District 29." He had not arrived yet but was said to have been appointed . . . I had the impression that the Poles in the administration building, who had been satisfied so far with only three or four rooms, were trying to deceive us.

We introduced Paul to the Polish officials and reminded them of the Commandant's order that Gerhart Hauptmann's house must not be requisitioned for housing and was not to be entered by anyone.

"You gentlemen are talking about Hauptmann, the poet . . ."

A well-dressed gentleman with white hair, who had stood to one side until then, had joined our circle. Compared with the Polish officials, who were simple people from the Socialist parties or the trade unions, and especially compared with us Germans, who were wearing our shabbiest civilian clothes (so that we would not be despoiled of our clothing in the public streets, as had happened more than once), he looked like a perfect gentleman.

*Polish administrative title, equivalent to German Landrat

"I am Professor Lorenz of the Ministry for Art and Culture at Warsaw. I would be glad to be of service to the great poet. May I visit him?"

He and Paul agreed upon a time for the visit.

Professor Lorenz kept his word.

The afternoon with him was one of the most pleasant ones during this summer of uncertainty. Hauptmann was in considerably better health, due to the warm weather and the rest that he had enjoyed. He was tanned and more vigorous and happier—though somewhat quieter—than before. He worked on the *New St. Christopher* every day.

His Polish guest, who was from Galicia* and spoke faultless German with an Austrian intonation, told about Polish performances of Hauptmann's dramas in Lemberg, Warsaw, and Cracow.

Hauptmann had a series of aphorisms read aloud, some of those he had been accustomed to jotting down in his little notebooks all his life: diary entries, satirical epigrams, or commentaries in verse. One of the aphorisms, written in April, 1945, was dedicated to the apollonian-olympian—and therefore entirely false—concept of Goethe that characterized bourgeois Idealism. He called it *Plunder* (RUBBISH):

*Die Welt ist zu blutig und zu dumm,
Wir kommen um diesen Punkt nicht herum.***

Another of these versified comments included the outcry:

Betäubung ist mein Leben.†

A third affirmed laconically:

*Was Geist auf dieser Erde war
Ist ermordet ganz und gar.‡*

The old man was concerned with describing his own spiritual condition "in the ruins of a world" (Hans von Hülsen).

The professor seemed touched by it. "You are so bitter, my dear Doctor!" he said softly. "Germany's fate is hard, but then—it is not undeserved. Think of the atrocious things that were done to my people. They are incontestable facts . . ."

After that no one spoke for quite a while. Finally Hauptmann said just as quietly as his guest, "Humane feelings have disappeared."

With a gesture he stopped his guest from speaking. Then he said hesitantly but with a definiteness that could not be ignored, "I—professor—am interested—in the fate—that's intended—for this land here . . ."

Professor Lorenz was ill-at-ease and said nothing for awhile. "Our government hopes to get it," he said finally. "But it depends upon the

*A part of Poland that belonged to Austria before World War I.

**The world is too bloody—we've found that out / and man is too stupid—without a doubt!

†My life is stupefaction!

‡All the spirit there was on earth / Is dead, is murdered—and hence the dearth.

Great Powers, who are meeting in Potsdam right now. Whatever may chance to happen. . .", he continued more vigorously, "you, Doctor Hauptmann, will not be affected by it. If you want to remain here or to travel—to Berlin, Santa Margherita, Hiddensee, as was your custom—you are perfectly free to do so! Everything will be in order again. Just be patient. And your charmingly furnished home—it has been a wonderful experience for me to have seen it—will remain yours. I am going back to Warsaw tomorrow and I will provide for the proper document . . ." With that the charming professor from the Ministry for Art and Culture took his leave. But the document did not appear. Paul called at the Landrat's office again and again, telephoned, asked a Polish official for his mediation in Warsaw. Everything was in vain.

Finally, weeks later, the certificate of protection that had been promised arrived in Agnetendorf. It forbade trespassing in the park or house at Wiesenstein and any other molestation of Gerhart Hauptmann under penalty of law.

The document of the Ministry of Education bore the date August 7, 1945, and had therefore been drawn up five days after the Potsdam decrees placing East Germany beyond the Oder and Neisse under Polish administration. The men in Warsaw seemed quite sure of themselves . . .

From that time on, the number of Poles in the villages and towns of the Riesengebirge grew rapidly. Whole families made themselves at home—with many children, grandparents, and more distant relatives. They occupied the houses and dwellings that were assigned to them by the Polish officials at the Landrat's office. Neither sickness nor death nor childbirth in a German family disturbed them. The German owner was mercilessly crowded out of his own house. When he and his family finally occupied only one room, the final blow was delivered.

The Pole suddenly declared, "You have offended Poland—you Fascist!"

If the German contradicted that and pointed out the cruelty of the treatment that was being accorded to his family, the reply was: "You swine are entirely too well off. You know how your SS treated us."

Unfortunately the facts that were reported in this connection were usually true, even though exaggerated a little here and there. But the bare facts were revolting enough. Many Poles had been the unfortunate victims of Hitler's extermination plans. Almost all of them mourned grievous losses of members of their families.

But what the victims of yesterday, justly embittered at their fate, had forgotten and, indeed, would not even admit as being true, was this: the personal innocence of their present victims, the people of East Germany, farmers and laborers, who had been no more able to stop the raging insanity than the conquered Poles.

The unchristian watchword of "a tooth for a tooth" poisoned the relations between Germans and Poles from the very outset. In fact, it is the attenuation or even the complete dissolution of the substance of Christianity which is the actual source of the modern barbarism that triumphed in Poland and other countries under Hitler and in East Germany and other countries under Stalin.

Almost everything was barbaric that took place in Silesia in those unforgotten summer days of the year of the surrender—including the sly tactics employed by most of the infiltrating Poles to drive out the local Germans.

The Pole would keep on tormenting his German host until finally the poor man forgot himself and said or did something rash—usually something quite insignificant. Immediately the Pole went to his "plenipotentiary" and demanded—for the sake of "the work of reconstruction" and peace in the family—the expulsion of the German, who was then deprived of his possessions and lodged in barracks. And so the home came into the hands of the Pole.

According to the same principle, German laws and names were eliminated. One morning Hirschberg became "Yelenia Gora"—a literal translation of the German.* And other places in the Riesengebirge suddenly had Polish names. The German names disappeared at the same time.

The moving force behind all these actions was the "Plenipotentiary for District 29."

When we community representatives called his attention to the orders of the Soviet Commandant, the stiff, blunt man had his interpreter, a student of architecture, tell us that he was commissioned by his government to care for the Poles in the district. "For the Germans the orders of the Commandant are valid."

At this brief conference I had noticed that the interpreter translated the words of his superior so that they sounded more courteous than they actually were. In particular, he left out the insulting references to all things German.

We were quite certain that the duality of the administration would inevitably lead to catastrophe.

The catastrophe came, and it came sooner and was more frightful and more far-reaching than we had thought possible in those dog days of the year 1945.

It began with the entry of Polish soldiers into Bad Warmbrunn. I asked Major Kalashnikov, who was in Krummhübel just then, what that meant. He puffed nervously on his long cigarette and cursed—in Russian. That was not a good sign. The interpreter said, "The major does not wish to give an explanation."

Shortly afterwards Polish militia appeared in all the villages and towns in the mountains. They commandeered a suitable house and set

*Literally, Hirschberg means "stag mountain."

it up as a police station. The possessions of the German owner were immediately divided among the militiamen, and anything left over was taken to Hirschberg to be sold on the recently flourishing black market—for the benefit of the police.

On one of those beautiful midsummer days I made my way towards Wiesenstein. The magnificent walk through the mountain forest with its varied prospects of valleys and peaks had by now become an adventurous undertaking. Where formerly thousands of happy vacationers had enjoyed themselves, there was not a soul to be seen. The paths, the mountain huts, the villages—all deserted. Not a sound to be heard. Only every couple of miles there came from the shrubbery a "*Stoi!*" The pair of Polish guards concealed in the thick underbrush would step out and examine my papers. The stamp of the Soviet Command Post would bring on a flood of cursing. Almost all these young Poles were bitter enemies of the Soviet Union.

In Agnetendorf Paul told me that the German burgomaster had been given a Polish colleague the day before—a certain Mr. Voyt.

I burst out laughing—but it was a bitter laugh. *Voyt* is the Polish word for "village magistrate." And so the individual communities were being incorporated into the Polish administrative system. That fitted in with what I had seen in the forest.

But for us Germans everything continued undecided. We sat at tea in the bright and cheerful Biedermeier room. Gerhart Hauptmann was in good physical condition. I read aloud an excerpt from the *New St. Christopher*. It was a monologue by the mountain priest about the ultimate concerns of mankind.

When I had finished this important prose work, the old man sighed, saying, "It is getting more and more difficult for me to scare up so much credulous optimism. Especially here and now . . ."

To distract his gloomy thoughts, his secretary told us about something amusing that had happened that very morning.

Two young soldiers of the Red Army appeared before Wiesenstein some time between eight and nine o'clock. They knocked and then jiggled the handle of the side door violently up and down.

The attendant opened a window and pointed to the certificate of protection from Warsaw which was glued to the inside of the glass.

The two soldiers looked at each other, their little caps perched on their fuzzy blond hair. Then one of them said, "We not make bang-bang . . ." They patted their belts and pockets to indicate they were unarmed. "Not going *zapzerap**, just take a look. You allow, please . . ." And they both clasped their gnarled peasant's hands together imploringly. The attendant opened the door and conducted them into Paradise Hall.

* *zapzerap*: steal.

The bewilderment of the two at the sight of the splendor around them had really been indescribable, Anni said. They had pulled their caps from their fuzzy heads of hair and had gazed around in astonishment with their mouths wide open.

When the attendant finally showed them the Russian edition of the works of Gerhart Hauptmann, which had been at hand in the hall since the surrender, one of them stammered, "Like church or Kremlin—you understand . . ." Then they had taken their leave with many deep bows, gone quietly out of the hall on tiptoe and run away through the park "on the double" . . .

Just as Anni had finished her story, new Soviet visitors were announced. A senior officer accompanied by a younger one appeared in the Biedermeier room.

The lieutenant colonel was heavy-set and short in the legs. He bowed politely, sat down in the chair offered him, and said nothing. His eyes never left Hauptmann, and when he was served Cognac, he drank to the poet in silence.

Meanwhile the captain inquired in excellent German whether Hauptmann had any wishes or if any difficulties had come up . . . No? Well, that was nice . . . And he reported to his superior, who nodded and remained silent.

The conversation turned to the effect of Hauptmann's works in Russia. The first edition of his complete works in the Russian language had appeared in 1902—four years before the first complete German edition.

The captain nodded. "Every school child in the Soviet Union knows the man who wrote *Die Weber*."

In connection with this I told of an occurrence during the war: For his eightieth birthday in 1942 Hauptmann had received a package from a German officer at the front. It was a well-thumbed volume of the Russian edition of his works. The officer wrote that his company had picked up the book in a captured Soviet bunker a short time before. It had been lying open on the table—at the place marked by the ribbon. It was the artist drama *Einsame Menschen* (LONELY LIVES).

The captain translated my report for the lieutenant colonel, who nodded again without saying a word, but now with a certain air of complacency.

As we were saying goodbye in the hall the talk turned to—Silesia. Paul said that the Poles in Agnetendorf were talking about the early expulsion of all Germans—in fact, they used it as a threat.

The lieutenant colonel, who did not understand our words, had gone ahead to his car. The captain went after him, exchanged a few sentences with him, and came back.

"No expulsion!" he said. "Everyone will remain here. You people here . . ." and he indicated Wiesenstein, which stood before the bulk of the mountains in the opalescent light ". . . certainly not. It won't happen at all . . ."

The next morning the expulsion of the first Germans began. Just as I was on my way to visit a colleague, who lived in one of the side valleys in the village, I saw a strange group of people coming down the village street.

In the lead was Schmid, the old mason, trudging along with his eyes on the ground and a dirty sheet of paper in his hand. Beside him walked a chubby-faced youth in the uniform of a Polish lieutenant. He could have been the German's grandson. Behind them, a militiaman with a machine pistol on his shoulder shuffled along. He had a cigarette stuck behind one ear and was smoking another and whistling *Lili Marlene*.

The group stopped in front of a house on the street. The nineteen-year-old lieutenant gave the old man a poke in the ribs and said, "*Daley Smialo!*" (Get at it.) His face was flushed from drinking.

The German rang the doorbell. A woman cautiously opened the door a crack. "Is your husband here and your mother?" he asked. The woman nodded to him, her neighbor, whom she had known since she was a child. "Well, then—I've been ordered . . ." And his eyes darted briefly to one side, where the two Poles were standing. "I have to read you the following . . ."

He raised the sheet of paper and, in a sorrowful voice, read the decree of a Polish Colonel Zinkovski ordering "the evacuation of the Germans listed below from the Polish territory and their free transportation west of the Lusatian Neisse." Time till departure: two hours. Luggage: sixty-five pounds each.

"Your names are down below," said the mason. "You're supposed to sign."

At that moment the sturdy woodsman's wife uttered a piercing cry and ran back into the house. Her husband appeared. He was pale as chalk. "But how—Heinrich—that's—oh, no! . . . There's still a just God."

The old mason sobbed.

The chubby-faced lieutenant cried, "You German swine have to obey. Here is Polish land. You understand perhaps this language . . ." And he pointed to the militiaman's machine pistol.

While the mason Schmid carried the dire news from house to house, I encountered the first victim of this blow against the rights of man in my homeland.

A retired teacher in her black Sunday dress came walking cautiously along a path through the fields. She clutched a traveling-rug under one arm and in the other hand she was carrying a shopping bag filled to the brim. In her excitement she had put her felt hat on crooked. After her, carrying her suitcase and a large cardboard box, came one of the last of the former French prisoners of war, who was still waiting to be called to Prague.

During the war he and I had exchanged many a frank word.

"What do you say to this, Monsieur Loyer?"

"*Moi—rien . . .*"

The Frenchman put down the luggage and held out his hand to me. "This is a disgrace to the civilized world. Just look at our poor, half-blind Kätzchen!* To whom did she ever do any harm? She's done nothing but good, monsieur—we prisoners of war can testify to that . . ."

When I told Monsieur Loyer what a Soviet officer had assured us only sixteen hours before, he laughed angrily. "They are puppets in Stalin's hand. He's deceiving them and you and us—the whole world, including these crazy, embittered Poles. Hitler still doesn't seem to be dead . . ."

He spat, picked up the luggage, and followed after his poor, half-blind Kätzchen, who walked sobbing through the fields of her homeland.

A telephone conversation with my wife informed me that the same thing was going on in Krummhübel. She said that our burgomaster had called up the Soviet Command Post and learned that the measures undertaken by the Poles were illegal. The Soviet colonel had roared into the telephone that they would disperse these rebellious Pollacks with whips.

I did see whips, heavy rubber whips—in the hands of the Polish militia. They whistled down on the backs of the expelled Germans, who were standing around at the place of assembly like a crowd of distracted people after an earthquake. Just so these present-day tormentors might once have stood at a place of assembly for Poles. There were about forty people—many women, children, old people, and a few men over fifty.

I went into the town-hall and asked the *vojt*, whom I had met in the meantime, what all this meant.

The boorish village magistrate roared, "Those people there—all Fascist criminals!"

I looked out through the low window at the village square. There stood Mother Mandel, who had been in charge of contributions for air-raid protection. It was true, some of the people had been rank-and-file members of the National Socialist Party; others had been in the women's organization, in the League of German Girls, or in the Hitler Youth. And the poor, half-blind Kätzchen had contributed a hundred marks from a small inheritance to the National Welfare Organization. The document had been found by the *vojt* in the village records. Those were the "Fascist criminals" of the village.

I hurried down the steep slopes to reach the highway at Hermsdorf as quickly as possible. There was a possibility that I might find a Soviet truck there that was on its way to Krummhübel. I was lucky. In front of an inn stood a Red Army truck.

The driver checked my papers. "Good—you ride along—soon . . ." And he got a second glass from the bar and filled it with vodka. "*Prost*—to war's end! We two still live—that enough . . ." He laughed good-naturedly and we drank.

A half hour went by, forty-five minutes . . . It was already 12:30.

*An affectionate nickname; literal meaning: "kitten."

"When are we leaving?" I asked. My host laughed uproariously. "Soon—I said it . . ." He had an Asiatic concept of time.

Then the column of the people being expelled from the village came down the main street, flanked by militia with machine pistols held ready for use. The chubby-faced lieutenant stumbled along behind—completely drunk.

At this moment a powerful vehicle came racing up the valley along the empty highway. My drinking companion immediately hid the vodka-bottle under the bench. He knew that piercing horn—it was the Commandant's car.

The car stopped a little ways in front of the column. Major Kalashnikov and a Polish captain jumped out. The major roared. The captain talked urgently to his lieutenant, who was staring off into the distance with glassy eyes. Expellers and expellees stood as though rooted to the spot.

When the Germans finally understood that they could return home, two of the women fell on their knees and recited the Lord's Prayer.

In Krummhübel the people being expelled had been sent home when they had gone only a short distance from the place of assembly. The streets were completely deserted.

That night we slept a leaden sleep and awoke the next morning feeling very depressed. Where were the winds of Fate driving us all?

As we were fortifying ourselves with some real coffee—my wife had bought it with her first Polish *zloties*,* which she had obtained for a piece of jewelry—our spaniel began to bark in front of the house.

"What are those Polacks up to now?" my wife exclaimed, still cross and irritable from the events of the previous day. She peered out cautiously through the curtains.

A dirty, unshaven man was walking up the path. Suddenly the dog stopped barking. From outside we heard "Well, Rüpel, at least *you're* still alive!" and then the dog's joyful whimpering.

Then we rushed to the door. It was true—that was Bob.

"Where did you come from, you old rascal?" I cried. I was overjoyed to see him. Bob and I had been friends for many, many years.

He laughed and said, "Straight from Berlin—by coal train . . ." And he pointed to his face and hair, his windbreaker, trousers, and shoes. Everything was covered with a crust of black dust.

When he had showered and put on one of my suits, he told us all about his quixotic idea, which was destined to be our salvation. Even Gerhart Hauptmann's fate would probably have been different but for Bob's audacious decision.

In Berlin Bob had met a group of refugees from Silesia. Their report moved him deeply. As he was pondering about how he could help us, he suddenly thought of his old German railway pass with the Russian text that had been used in the occupied eastern territories.

*Polish monetary unit.

"Why not try it out on Ivan, I thought. Maybe it will still be accepted."

Hungrily Bob bit into the ham sandwich, likewise the result of our *zloty* exchange. Then he said with a satisfied grin:

"And it was accepted—as you see. They took me along on their empty coal train to Silesia . . ."

4 Visitors from Berlin

Bob had returned to Berlin. He was looking for Johannes R. Becher, the writer, whom I had recommended that he see. This was no easy task in the ruins of the huge city, where at that time only a few hundred telephones were functioning. Finally he learned the address: *Schlüterstrasse 45*.

Bob found it strange that this Communist, who had returned to Germany from Moscow, should live in the British part of the city with its four occupation sectors. But his source was reliable, so he set out on his way.

The elegant office building on the *Kurfürstendamm** was undamaged. In the entrance hall a white-haired doorkeeper greeted him pleasantly and asked if he could be of service.

"Does Mr. Becher live here?" asked Bob.

"The President's office is on the third floor. May I show you to the elevator?"

Bob thought he was dreaming. In the sea of ruins all around, this building had remained a peaceful island of civilization where even the elevator still worked.

He stepped into a huge office with a sign on the door that read: *Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands* (CULTURAL LEAGUE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC RENOVATION OF GERMANY). The room teemed with activity. There were two men sitting at desks. Three secretaries were typing and a fourth was telephoning. Along the wall sat six or seven visitors, who seemed to be waiting to see someone. Every minute or so one of the three doors opened. Messengers brought papers, a secretary was called for dictation, new visitors came into the room.

"What did you wish?" one of the men asked Bob.

"I'd like to speak to President Becher."

The man cast an eloquent glance at those waiting. "The President

*West Berlin's main street.

is very much in demand," he said affably. "Can't our General Secretary handle your business?"

"No," answered Bob. "I've just come from Silesia and I have to speak to Mr. Becher personally." And he gave the man my letter.

A few minutes later he was called into Becher's office. The room was bright, and its elegant furniture, the few pictures, and a figurine all showed good taste.

Becher shook Bob's hand cordially. He asked him to be seated in one of the big overstuffed chairs. Then behind his glasses his round, owlsh eyes surveyed his visitor. "If I am correctly informed, you are a refugee from Silesia," he said quietly.

Bob came back with: "Well, no—let's say I've been doing some traveling on the black market." Then he told about his adventurous trip into the Riesengebirge. "On the return trip on top of those wet, smelly chunks of coal I nearly got mine. A couple of times, stupified by lack of sleep, I woke to find myself sliding down the black, slimy slope. But that was only the romantic part of my trip."

Bob fixed his eyes on the President of the *Kulturbund*, who was just lighting a fresh cigarette from the butt of the old one. Just where did the man get all those cigarettes, Bob wondered, with the greediness of a person who had none. At the same time he said, "Silesia is ruled by crime."

And with a precision characteristic of him, he related the facts as he had observed them in his homeland. "That the Poles robbed me of everything but my shirt on my way back may be excusable. After all, I was in the country illegally," he said with fine objectivity. "But things get a little worse when people's shoes are removed on the street and collected in sacks—and this just before High Mass on a Sunday. All of them—men, women, and children—had to go on to church barefooted."

"Don't forget the Nazis' crimes in Poland," said President Becher with a rather subdued sternness.

Bob replied amiably that he would forget them no more than he would those of the Poles in East Germany. "After all, not all of my fellow-countrymen were Nazis and responsible for Hitler's deeds." He took a deep breath, looked fixedly at Becher again, and continued:

"Or isn't it a crime when a sick young man is just shot down in a quarrel about a package of tobacco?"

"Hm," mumbled Becher—his cigarette held tight between his lips.

"The murdered man had a certificate of protection from the Soviet Commandant. You also knew him, incidentally—at least indirectly. He was the brother of Gerhart Pohl . . ." That blow struck home.

"Let's spare ourselves this enumeration of atrocities," said Becher softly. "I know that conditions in Silesia have become indefensible."

Bob murmured, "Indeed they are indefensible, Mr. Becher! If something doesn't happen soon our friends there are lost. Even Gerhart Hauptmann's situation is bad enough, in spite of Soviet and Polish protection . . ."

"I'm ready to help," said Becher. "If you think it is at all possible for me to get there—what you have learned will be very helpful to me . . ." And finally he pushed the pack of cigarettes over to Bob.

Smoking their cigarettes, they deliberated on the best way to proceed. Success could be attained only with the help of the Soviet Military Administration, which had to be won over to their plan first of all.

"I'll try," declared Becher. And he rose to his feet behind his handsome desk and spoke out into the room over Bob's head as he sat in the easy chair; it was as though he were addressing an invisible mass meeting, which seemed to represent Germany in his eyes—such hard eyes and yet at the same time strangely dreamy ones:

"The resurrection of the German spirit is at stake, that fountainhead of humanism! Our people must rise up out of all these trials and sufferings to a new order of things . . ."

Bob looked up bemused from the depths of his chair at this enthusiastic preacher of Communism. His mind was busy with parallel cases during the period of the Thirty Years' War.

The third of October was a misty day; it was cold, wet, and gloomy. Because of severe autumn storms the trees in the mountains had lost their leaves earlier than usual.

My morale had sunk to zero. At the meeting of the community council that morning I had resigned my position. I knew what that meant for me and my family and for our home: loss of protection and finally loss of our modest possessions.

Strangely enough, the Polish burgomaster, who had supplanted the Riesengebirge farmer some weeks before, had not accepted my resignation. The former farm hand, a milker from the region around Rovno, was timid and shrewd at the same time. He had no confidence in his ability to administer alone a resort town whose German population still amounted to ninety per cent of the whole. It was more convenient for him to make use of the German councilmen appointed by the Soviets against their own fellow citizens, who were no longer protected by the Russians and had not been for a long time.

When he had commissioned me that morning to supervise the turning over to the government of twenty of the thirty-six cows that our farmers still possessed, I had protested. What were the 200 people of Wolfshau supposed to eat? Aside from potatoes, they had only the dairy products of these cows. Other food was sold only for *zloties*, and our farmers, householders, and pensioners did not have any. Only a few woodworkers were earning very small amounts in *zloties*.

"You, Mr. Pohl, remain member of council," the Polish burgomaster had said, with his mouth full of food. "I understand you—very good." He had speared another strip of bacon with his pocket-knife and shoved

it into his mouth. "We just requisition cows through our militia . . ." He laughed slyly.

I protested again. "*Burmistrz*, the people are starving . . ."

The burgomaster shoved the paper from his bacon carelessly onto a pile of official documents. He laughed. "All store full of food—good products, many. In Poland no one hungry . . ."

"And the money?"

The former milker yawned. "All have good, pretty things—your people. Just sell . . ."

"Most of them have lost their possessions long ago. You know that very well," I cried, stung by so much hard-heartedness.

"Then just work. Work brings pay."

There was no more work available anywhere. It was hopeless to talk with the man. I left the town hall.

As I strode along through the mist on my way to Wolfshau, two vehicles passed me—an old armored car and a modern, medium-sized truck. There had been a few Russian soldiers sitting in each of them. This surprised me, because the Red Army had become less and less conspicuous as the autumn days passed. The command post still existed in Hirschberg, of course, but the liaison men in each community had vanished. The administration had passed into the hands of the Poles. The German Landrat had also been dismissed. In his place the "plenipotentiary" was now in complete control as Starost.

As I went from farm to farm and prepared the people for the probable loss that very day of over half their livestock, my own depression grew even greater because of the despair of the farmers. Suddenly it seemed to me that I heard my name being called. It came at short intervals, without much pause for breath, through the mist that was becoming thicker all the time. I answered in the direction the sound came from.

Suddenly a neighbor girl stood before me. She gasped out:

"Come home right away! The Russians are there—from Berlin . . . with a Mr. Becker . . ."

"Johannes R. Becher?" I asked.

The girl shrugged. "Don't know. A fat man with gray hair and glasses."

I hurried right home. There I found my comrade of long ago—older, as we all were, but vigorous, plump, and still with his old heartiness. He introduced his companions on "this unpleasant trip," as he himself frankly called it: the Soviet Captain Weisspapier, Lieutenant Chanov, and the German journalist Gustav Leuteritz. The Soviet drivers—a Mongolian soldier and a Dutch Communist—were sitting outside in their cars, holding their machine pistols ready for use in order to keep away twenty Poles from the neighborhood, who were making a terrible racket.

I retired to my study with Becher. We hadn't seen each other for twelve years, and we had quarreled before parting. The lyric poet had

been a consistent Communist for twenty years. "Just why are you so fanatic?" I had asked him once and received the significant answer: "After the first World War there were only three possibilities for me: the Catholic Church, the radicals of the Right, or the Communists. I decided for the Communists. I will remain loyal to them . . ."

Becher had remained loyal to them, even when revolutionary Communism had been liquidated and militant Stalinism had taken its place. He had seen friends and acquaintances disappear. Always he had held the flag high—heartlessly and like a third-rate lawyer, but loyally. So he had gradually become a powerful man in the propaganda field.

And yet he made a splendid impression. He was in his mid-fifties and had thinning grey hair. The shrillness of the radical Bohemianism that had once characterized him had disappeared. It was a mature man, one who knew what he wanted, who sat on my green leather sofa.

I alluded to our quarrel in 1932, which had been caused by his fanaticism. He looked at me with his round owlsh eyes and smiled. "Why that was—a thousand years ago," he said affably. Then he continued:

"We've come here to help you. Seriously, Gerhart Pohl, you must come to Berlin—Gerhart Hauptmann and you and any other creators of culture who are still here. There we have great things for you to do; here you will be ruined!"

I looked at him. "That means then, that Silesia will become Polish?" Becher did not lower his eyes. "You know the Potsdam Agreement. According to it, the territory goes to Poland."

"Given to Poland to administer—until the signing of a treaty of peace, which will determine the final border."

"My friend, don't count on that!" said Becher seriously.

"And you German Communists don't intend to do anything about it?" I whispered hoarsely. Never absent from my mind were thoughts of the expulsion of the people of Agnetendorf, the farmers weeping at the loss of their last animals, the people driven out of their homes, those who had been beaten, arrested—the whole horrible misery of my homeland.

Becher seemed to feel that. He did not answer my question but changed the subject instead.

"You shall publish a monthly journal. You will be given ample financial support," he said. "Or would you rather take over the literary division of the radio system? Or the cultural division of the central administration might be a possibility . . ."

I thought I was dreaming. I had just been a barely tolerated coolie of the Polish administration. And now suddenly I was to become editor-in-chief, division director, perhaps even councillor in a ministerial department. The scene in the quiet study was a very strange one.

Just as we were being called to dinner, the first shots were fired outside. Advancing over the pastureland, which was already yellow and

wintery-looking, and taking shelter behind the mist-clad trees and bushes as though they were stalking game, came about thirty members of the Polish Border Patrol. The Polish civilians at the Red Army vehicles were yelling even louder than before. The Soviet officers ran out in front of the house. We followed them. There was the leader of the Polish detachment—Sergeant Hübschmann.

I had known him since the occupation of our part of town by the Border Patrol, which guarded the border between Silesia and Czechoslovakia and was supposed to prevent the intrusion of robber-bands from Bohemia. The local ones, to be sure, were given a free rein, and quite frequently soldiers from the Patrol were members of them.

Hübschmann was a mechanic by trade. He had fought in a Polish battalion of the Red Army, one of those that had been formed under Russian leadership after the massacre of the Polish Officer Corps at Katyn.

The sergeant had become paymaster and quartermaster in the Border Patrol. From the first day he had behaved decently towards the Germans. He liked our house very much. Almost every day he spent an hour or so with us, talking about the future and his desire to be a mechanic again and to earn "real money." The immense sums that he took in by bartering and by what practically amounted to theft gave him no pleasure. He wanted to go to the West, preferably to the U.S.A.

Ever since I had secretly resumed contact for him with his relatives in America—even then he had not dared to write himself because of his position as a soldier dependent on the Russians—he had been devoted to us and very friendly. When we ran out of food, he wrote the following magic formula on a little piece of paper addressed to the German baker who baked for the Border Patrol: "Pleas giv fiv loavs bread to the bearer of the paiper." And it was this Hübschmann who was coming through our garden with his pistol ready to fire. Behind him in a triple circle stood the soldiers of the Border Patrol with their machine pistols pointed at us.

When he learned what had happened, he gave an embarrassed titter and said, "I thought it was an attack and came to free the German *Burmisztr.*" Then he saluted the Soviet officers, shook hands with me and then withdrew his men, after he had ordered the noisy civilians to hike for home immediately.

Then the two drivers came into the house with us. We ate in peace and more luxuriously than we had for years—using the Russians' supplies.

That afternoon we drove to Agnetendorf. We had been unable to announce our arrival by phone since our telephone had again failed to function.

On the way we passed several groups of miserable-looking people, shabbily dressed—actually in rags. They were headed down into the valley with old go-carts and sleds on home-made wheels.

They were dispossessed German farmers. Driven from their homes, they were seeking some sort of shelter elsewhere—with relatives or

friends, in the cities. Quite a few were making their way directly to the West.

Captain Weisspapier thought they were Poles. We stopped, and I questioned the people. They were poor farmers from the little village of Baberhäuser. They had been chased out of their village at night with the aid of hunting dogs. One man showed us the tooth-marks of a large dog on the calf of his leg. The owner of the dog had cried out, "That is revenge for a murdered brother!"

When we stopped before the gates of Wiesenstein, it was already growing dark. A cool evening wind blew down from the mountain tops. We entered the park. There was a faint rustling in the dense rows of bushes and a sighing in the tall old fir trees. Deep shadow lay around the house.

I went upstairs alone to announce the arrival of the visitors to Gerhart Hauptmann, while Paul conducted the others into the hall.

"Most honored officers, Mr. President! You are envoys from the great world out there," said the attendant in the style of a chief of protocol receiving a diplomatic mission at the court of a prince. "The master is isolated," he continued glibly. "You really cannot fully appreciate the pleasure that your most welcome visit means to us here at imperiled Wiesenstein, where it has become entirely too quiet of late."

"Imperiled? In what way?" asked the Soviet captain.

Paul smiled roguishly. "Even the best certificate of protection is of no help in an earthquake."

In silence the four men contemplated the art objects in Paradise Hall, which was festively illumined by the light from the chandeliers.

Gerhart Hauptmann was sitting in his accustomed chair when I showed his guests in to him.

Johannes R. Becher bowed and shook the hand extended to him with such joyful impetuosity that the old man was a little startled. Then he introduced the Soviet officers and the German journalist. They all showed sincere respect for Hauptmann.

Chairs were pulled forward, and we sat around the old man in a rough semicircle. And as always at Wiesenstein, he began the conversation.

"I am an old man and no longer have any ambition. But what happens to Germany concerns us all."

While tea was served, he had a letter read that he had written to Maxim Gorki in 1922 when the Russian writer had asked him for active aid during the catastrophic food shortage in the Soviet Union.

"What I said in that letter," Hauptmann continued, "applies at present to our starved and exhausted Germany in the time of its national catastrophe."

Becher's eyes had begun to gleam. "We have indeed become a spiritually and intellectually impoverished people," the Communist lyricist began softly. "That is why we have to come to you, Gerhart Hauptmann! We ask for your help . . ." And gradually bending forward

towards the old man, he continued to speak, becoming more and more fervent and enthusiastic all the time.

"Today, Gerhart Hauptmann, millions of people look to you! They are waiting for a word, an exhortation from you! We all need your spiritual energy to put Germany on her feet and give her strength again. We must rebuild under difficult conditions. It is our firm belief that we will succeed in this, supported by the finest resources of humanism. Your word is necessary for that, Gerhart Hauptmann, and that is why we ask it of you!"

The visionary stopped speaking—intoxicated by his own words, which seemed a bit comical as one looked at the sick old man in his easy chair, from whom such prodigious things were expected. Becher pulled a cigarette from his pocket, looked around surreptitiously, and then put it back again unobtrusively. He had found out that one did not smoke in Hauptmann's presence.

All the creases and little lines in Hauptmann's face had begun to move during Becher's sermon. The passion of the big words seemed to have had an effect on the dramatist. "I am at your service," said Gerhart Hauptmann after a long pause. He was scarcely audible. "You do indeed give me a tremendous task, although I am already—on the threshold . . . I am a German, and it is quite clear that I will remain one. What we are discussing here is something that concerns Germany . . ."

Exhausted, he stopped speaking. Becher beamed. The Soviet officers also seemed pleased.

Meanwhile half a hundred Silesians had gathered in front of Wiesenstein. They had hurried there by secret paths from Agnetendorf, Kieselwald, Hermsdorf, Saalberg, and Schreiberhau. Questions filled the air: Was Hauptmann leaving Silesia? Could a child separated from his family or a sick, old woman or a trunk or letter be taken back to Berlin with the visitors? And angrily, everybody at once tried to tell about the underhanded dealings, the knavish tricks, and the misdeeds of the Poles.

The excited people stood there in the faint light that came from the windows of Wiesenstein. They could not be persuaded to leave until finally Paul told them that "Tomorrow the gentlemen of the delegation will be ready to listen to all of you . . ." After that, the crowd disappeared in the darkness as silently as it had gathered. We had supper with Margarete in the wood-panelled dining room. Afterwards the lady of the house retired and left us alone.

Lieutenant Chanov, who knew very little German, made himself comfortable on the big sofa. With his high-topped boots up on the light pigskin of the sofa, his camera stuck behind his head as a pillow, and a cuspidor beside him as an ashtray, the lieutenant, born the son of a prince in the Caucasus, stared at the ceiling, smoked, and spat whenever

he felt the need. Finally he fell asleep and snored loudly. Captain Weisspapier, on the other hand, was wide awake. He asked about various details of the new way of life in Silesia, which might well have seemed terrible to him, too. But he was from the Moscow school of silent men. Not a word of sympathy escaped his lips. Johannes R. Becher was also silent about everything he heard. They both knew that the terrible events were a necessary part of the Kremlin's general plans for the destruction of Prussia and of all German material wealth that they could get their hands on for the next three or four generations.

The next morning I took a walk with the captain. We spoke to the people whom we chanced to meet—Germans and Poles. With a dour objectivity, the former related frightful details about their recent existence: a husband arrested, a daughter who had vanished, a farm home lost, all their possessions taken away . . . To the question of the captain: "Do you want to go to Germany?" they always replied with the same astonished shaking of the head and the words: "But we *are* in Germany!" No Silesian understood that his homeland should suddenly be—Poland. And the immigrant Poles, understandably bitter and perhaps also already suffering pangs of conscience, usually cursed the Germans, whom they called "Fascists." Only one little man with crafty eyes said, "For me, Lemberg is still the most beautiful city in the world."*

The stout but efficient little captain, who as a civilian had been a journalist, shook his head. Finally he said, "You understand—I'm a soldier and have been ordered to protect Gerhart Hauptmann and his friends and moreover to find out how to get them to Germany safe and sound . . ."

I asked whether he would report to General Zhukov about what he saw in Silesia.

The captain's reply was significant: "That's high politics—not my department."

On our way home we encountered an especially picturesque victim of this "high politics".

A little old man, in an old bathrobe with a flowered pattern, came trudging up the path through the fields. His thick, white hair was wet with sweat, and it adhered to his intelligent-looking head. His face was covered with hair too—his short moustache was disheveled. He was hot from the steep climb and his bathrobe was open so that his patched jacket without any buttons and his torn trousers were visible. Wooden shoes and a rough walking stick that he had broken off in the forest completed the picture of an old beggar.

*Lemberg (Lwow), a large city located in the southeast of Poland before World War I, was taken over by Russia after the war along with much territory that had formerly been Polish.

"Why, Councillor!" I cried, greatly shocked.

The old man stopped about five paces from us. He caught his breath and then, still gasping a little, he said, "I know you, my dear sir. But where did I meet you? Help my old head, which has so many things to think about."

"I was a pupil of yours, Councillor." And I gave him my name.

The man in beggar's clothes shook hands with me. Once more his light blue eyes had the glow that used to fascinate us students. He was world-famous—Professor of Philosophy, honorary doctor at three American universities, and honorary member of many scholarly associations of Germany as well as other countries. His name was Eugen Kühnemann.

"What you see on me," he said simply, "is all that I possess. When they drove me out of my little house in Fischbach, they didn't let me keep a single manuscript or book—no underclothing and not even a tooth brush."

The captain, who knew Kühnemann's biography of Schiller, asked softly, "Were you a National Socialist?"

The world-famous old man stopped in the village street. "To say it quite bluntly to you, a representative of the Soviet power—I am a decided philosophical opponent of Bolshevism. That is—I remain a respectful admirer of the Russian people, as reflected most perfectly in Leo Tolstoy. But the false doctrine of Bolshevism, on the other hand—and it is a false doctrine, as I will prove to you in a moment . . ."

The captain smiled courteously. "It is bold of you, Professor, to condemn a doctrine that a sixth of the earth regards as true."

"You just imagine that," cried the little old man and pulled his shabby bathrobe together, eager to do battle. "I will prove to you that the incomparably stronger idea of Christianity lives on beneath the surface even in this sixth of the earth . . ." And he spoke about the religious philosophies of Russia and about observations that German soldiers had made in the Soviet Union.

When we reached Wiesenstein, which was also Kühnemann's goal—he and Gerhart Hauptmann had been friends for a long time—the captain took leave of the old man cordially. "I hope we will be able to continue the interesting discussion."

Later he told me with a laugh how glad he was that he had met a "real German professor." "And I thought that they still existed only in our Soviet humorous newspaper *Krokodil* . . ."

From early in the morning the Silesians were again in the park at Wiesenstein. Already thirty or forty were standing around in groups, sitting at the sides of the road, or talking to the Dutch Communist, who was guarding the two vehicles.

Captain Weisspapier said that the people should wait. First he had to drive to the Soviet headquarters at Liegnitz.

During his absence the number of petitioners increased to at least a hundred. The Dutchman was finally so deeply moved by their stories, which he had been forced to listen to for hours, that he brought the members of the delegation out into the park.

In a flash they were completely surrounded by people. Lieutenant Chanov, who had photographed every nook and cranny of Wiesenstein and Agnetendorf, refused to take a picture of this crowd of desperate but hopeful people. Apparently it was "not his department."

The hubbub caused by everyone's trying to speak at once made it impossible to carry on an intelligent conversation, and so first of all we divided the people into small groups. Each person was allowed to tell about his troubles individually. Johannes R. Becher apparently had spoken to the captain previously and found out what wishes could be granted. Letters to relatives in one of the four German zones of occupation were accepted. This was a great relief to most, since the Polish postal system sent mail to all countries in the world except Germany. In addition, single suitcases and packages of personal possessions and parcels of important papers were accepted, to be forwarded to their destinations from Berlin. Soon most of the petitioners were taken care of.

The "difficult cases" had to wait until the captain's return. They sat around patiently in the warm midday sun in the park.

The captain had brought back food for Hauptmann's household from Liegnitz. He had also conferred with the Starost in Hirschberg. The traveling orders from the Soviet marshal had caused the Polish official to issue a new certificate of protection for Gerhart Hauptmann and to bring it over personally.

The official document of the *Rzeczpospolita Polska*, which figures in the history of the times as the "Zhukov Certificate," reads as follows:

"At the express wish of the Cultural Delegation of Marshal Zhukov, the German writer Dr. Gerhart Hauptmann in Agnetendorf is placed under the special protection of the Polish State. Any trespassing in his house, removal of objects therefrom, and molestation of his person are expressly forbidden and will be punished to the fullest extent of the law."

I received the same certificate of protection. A little later it was also granted to the six scholars and artists in the Hirschberg district who were to be taken along on the special train to Berlin and Dresden that was being planned. The seventh, Professor Eugen Kühnemann, died before that time, completely destitute. He is said to have been buried at Schreiberhau.

Captain Weisspapier had had the local functionaries of the P.P.R. (Polish Communist Party) called together at Wiesenstein by town messengers.

Eight men and one woman had appeared at the designated hour. Most of them were very young. All of them looked insolent. Two were

wearing the uniform of the Communist Youth League. The captain addressed them in Polish: "Do you know, comrades, who lives here?"

One said, "A German dramatist," and others murmured the name "Hauptmann." The impression was that they connected the idea of military rank with it.* The young woman, filled with hate, cried out, "What do we Poles care who this German is? He should get out of here and go to Germany . . ."

Then the gentle Jew lost his patience. Aroused, he cried out, "Who freed you people from the Fascist yoke? The victorious Red Army! And you dare to sabotage the reconstruction that our Marshal has ordered. Gerhart Hauptmann is no Fascist . . ."

"Oh, yes he is," said the party-woman. "He attacked our allies over the Fascist radio after they had bombed Dresden."

The captain cried, "It is not your business to meddle in high politics. Your party function is here in the district of Hirschberg, and here lives the great poet and humanist Gerhart Hauptmann. He has fought for social justice. You, as good comrades, should know that."

He took the Polish translations of Hauptmann's works from the table and showed them around. Then he launched into a rather lengthy address full of political instructions and tactical considerations.

After this conference, it was clear to me that it was intended that Gerhart Hauptmann play the role of a powerful ace in the Soviet's political game. I wondered if the old man noticed that. The visit had cheered him up markedly. He had dictated the impressive Declaration to the German People, saying in it that he remained united with them in misery and destitution just as he had been formerly when they were all happy. Aside from this, he was amiable—reticent—completely non-committal.

The rest of the day was devoted to the unfortunate Germans who still besieged Wiesenstein.

There was a blond young woman from Berlin, who had been so unfortunate as to end up in Silesia. "Take me with you, please, captain," she cried, weeping, which made her pale face even more beautiful. She and her three small children were permitted to make the journey in the truck. Beside herself with joy, she embraced little Weisspapier, who was embarrassed but pleased.

In addition, an old woman with phlebitis, a child separated from his family, a married couple in poor health, and a veteran of the first World War, all of whom came from Berlin or West Germany, were taken along. The joy of those chosen was touching. They rubbed their hands, wept, or stared out into space in a daze. The large number of those rejected left Wiesenstein deeply grieved.

**Hauptmann* means "captain" in German.

By the time the delegation left, they had accomplished much for themselves and for us. Lieutenant Chanov had a complete set of photographs of Wiesenstein, as it had been for four decades and as it will probably never be again. Johannes R. Becher took along Hauptmann's Declaration and a little volume of recent poems for his new publishing house. Leuteritz was the only German journalist with authentic material about Hauptmann's last days in Silesia's catastrophe. Being under an obligation to the Soviets, he was never able to make full use of it. Since then he has been arrested. No one knows what he is accused of.

We who remained behind enjoyed the official protection of Poland, suddenly our new government. Besides, we had the certainty that the hurricane that was raging in our homeland would not swallow us up, after all. And the buoy of safety—a questionable one for all that—was the Red Army.

When things had quieted down in Wiesenstein again, I sat for a long time in the growing dusk with Gerhart Hauptmann. He praised the captain's circumspection and cordiality, Becher's passionate activity, the journalist's quiet but tender sympathy. And then, without preamble, I heard the question in the half-dark room: "Are we really going now?"

I answered, "The decision is yours. After this visit, it's clear that no one will drive you out . . ."

For a while there was silence between us. Finally the old man whispered, "No doubt the decisive question is: am I still useful to anyone here?"

In the last pale twilight, I saw a quiet smile play over the countless wrinkles of his face.

"I, too, will go . . ." said Gerhart Hauptmann very softly, almost without voicing the words. "Of course: feet first! You understand what I mean . . ."

5 Expulsion

The certificate of protection had restored our courage and vitality. Might we not wait in safety and see what would develop? We thought so—and so did all the Germans of the district, who envied us because we had it.

But we were wrong. Conditions in Silesia had become so chaotic that only brute force prevailed.

During the night after All Souls' Day, I was awakened by the furious barking of dogs. I heard hard blows against the doubly-locked kitchen entrance to my little house.

I was out of bed in a bound. In the upstairs hallway I met my friend Kurt, who had fled from Oppeln and had been staying with us for some time. Kurt spoke Polish fluently. He ran with me to the telephone to summon the militia, but the phone was dead. Later we found out that the wire outside the house had been cut.

Quietly we opened the kitchen door; violent blows continued to rain against the outer entry. As we turned on the light, the noise outside suddenly stopped. We saw the shadows of several men on the other side of the door, which was already split.

Kurt called out to them to leave the place, saying that the house and the people in it were under special protection. And he recited the text of the Zhukov certificate, which he had learned by heart.

The answer was a salvo of cursing and then renewed blows on the door, which split further. And then the first bullet whistled past our ears. We put out the light and ran upstairs, where our frightened wives were sitting on the edge of a bed.

I turned off the electric current at the main switch. The house lay in complete darkness—and silence. The only sound was the continued barking of the dogs.

Suddenly a bull's eye lantern went on downstairs. By its light we saw a masked figure. After him came another. As they started up the stairs, Kurt, who was strong as an ox, threw a heavy oak armchair down

on them. There was a muffled thudding, the breaking of glass, a suppressed groan. And again shouts resounded in the darkness. Our hearts pounding, we sat behind the stair railing.

Suddenly it was quiet again. The two dogs came running upstairs to us, their tails wagging. The intruders had left the house.

We turned on the lights. There lay the broken chair and a picture with its frame broken off. In the ceiling we saw some bullet holes. Otherwise, no damage had been done.

While our wives made coffee, we nailed up the wreck of the back door and then barricaded it with props and cross-bars.

Sometime before two o'clock in the morning, just as we had got back in bed again, there was a terrible sound outside. It sounded like the war-whoop of an Indian tribe as described by the late Karl May.

The barricaded door fell in no time at all. The house was invaded by twelve men, shooting wildly in all directions with machine pistols and revolvers.

A short man with shoe polish on his face confronted us in the upstairs hallway. Others came crowding after him, most of them with electric lanterns. "On with the lights!" they yelled and kept on shooting. Resistance would have meant death for all of us. I turned on the light.

The robbers either had their faces smeared with shoe polish so that they were unrecognizable or were masked in various fantastic ways. They shoved the four of us into one bedroom. There the short man watched over us with a machine pistol. When Kurt cursed at him, he hit him in the face with the stock of the pistol without saying a word. The blood flowed down slowly over Kurt's torn cheek.

The door had been left open. We watched as all our possessions were taken from the other rooms and quickly carried away: suits, coats, furs, shoes, all kinds of linen, trunks and suitcases, the typewriter, the vacuum cleaner, and the radio (for which I had obtained a special permit).

The bandit in our room lit a cigarette. Kurt happened to raise his hand to wipe the blood from his face. The Pole jerked up his machine pistol.

"*Stracz!*"

Kurt said the insulting word, which means "coward," with the utmost calm. Then he brusquely demanded a cigarette.

And the bandit actually reached in his pants pocket and gave each of us a cigarette. And he grinned as he did so. The grin was his downfall.

I immediately recognized the shoddy gold filling that I had seen in the mouth of Pavel, a member of the Border Patrol.

Soon afterward there was a whistle. The robbery was over—the house cleaned out in twenty minutes. I still had the suit that I had quickly pulled on over my pajamas. Kurt, who was wearing only a bathrobe, was so destitute that he had to go to the doctor in a pair of women's

sport slacks. Nor did his wife have any clothing left. Only my wife's things, which were hanging in the wardrobe in our "prison room," had been overlooked.

The next morning the commander of the militia, the burgomaster, and a representative of the Landrat appeared. They wrote down our statements and discussed matters for hours, drinking up our coffee and schnaps in the process. My report that the Border Patrol was involved, at least in the person of Pavel, was silently made note of.

That afternoon we were visited by an elegant little gentleman in a black, tailored coat and a blocked hat, who looked as though he had stepped from the pages of a London fashion magazine of 1925. This ministerial official from Warsaw, who had chanced to be in Hirschberg, wanted an accurate account of the robbery.

So it came about that the bandits, some of whom were soldiers and some civilians, were arrested—in this one case—and sentenced to prison. The stolen goods, however, could not be located. They had apparently been sent on to central Poland that very night.

From the ministerial official we learned that the "systematic transfer of the German population to their homeland"—as it was put by the Warsaw government to deceive the western allies—was now definitely to be carried out, despite the approaching winter.

"After all, your poor countrymen simply must have some peace and quiet again," said the philanthropic gentleman.

We asked him if the whole population of Silesia was to be deported.

"Why, what are you thinking of! Twenty-five percent will remain here. Besides, everything will be done in an entirely legal manner. The British in Kohlfurt are taking care of the transportation, which will be carried out in the most humane way conceivable."

The British in Kohlfurt—that was an important bit of news for us oppressed people. This rail center, which is located a few miles east of the Lusatian Neisse, could be reached from Krummhübel in just two hours by car. But only one person I knew still owned a car. He was a Pole and a doctor. In the last year of the war he had been assigned to a military hospital in the Riesengebirge. And now he had been licensed as medical director of a hospital. He was himself interested in getting to know the British. The next morning the two of us drove to Kohlfurt.

The extensive train yards, from which several hundred trains had once been dispatched daily, lay desolate in the pale November sunlight. The halls and passageways were littered with trash. The rails, which had not been used for some months, were covered with rust. Between the ties there were weeds, already withered by the approaching winter.

In one of the gigantic luggage rooms we found a few people at work. They were making barriers and passageways, such as are customary at

border stations. Here the deportation was to be carried out in high style.

When we inquired about the British command, the *kirovnik* (foreman) said brusquely, "They're extraterritorial. No one can speak to them."

We showed him our papers. When he read the name of Marshal Zhukov on my certificate of protection, he became uncertain. "They're back there in the stationmaster's offices. But I haven't said anything . . ."

He accepted a cigarette with silent thanks and turned back to his workmen.

"What do you want?" asked the astonished British officer, who had been perched on the edge of a desk reading an English detective story.

I stammered, a little awkwardly: "Are all Silesians to be driven out—of their homeland?"

The young officer, who had short red hair, looked at me in bewilderment. "You know the Potsdam Agreement? Are you a journalist?"

I nodded my head, suddenly deciding to go along with this suggestion.

"We have orders to take all Germans in Poland back to Germany."

"Then you will have to go to the Polish border. You are right in the middle of Germany here."

"Since when?" The Englishman looked at me mockingly.

I answered, "Since the beginning of recorded history in Europe—for the past eight hundred years, anyway."

The officer burst out laughing. He seemed to think I was an embittered Hitlerite with dreams of world conquest. "All the signs, shops, taverns, depots, newspapers—everything, absolutely everything in the Polish language. And you talk about a German land?"

"The Polish aspect is no older than the repainting job—three months at most. May I prove to you that you are right in the middle of Germany?"

I looked around the room. On the wall hung an old-fashioned telephone and beneath it the telephone book for the governmental district of Liegnitz. I looked up Kohlfurt. Except for a Mr. Rudkowski, the columns showed only German names, and the Rudkowski listed was a railroad inspector—a German official.

The Englishman studied the telephone listing that had hung right under his nose for days and shook his head. "That's really funny," he said finally. "And I thought that just beyond this railway station were the Khirgiz Steppes . . ."

The deportation of the Silesians could no longer be stopped. Utterly depressed, we drove home. The Polish doctor, who had studied in Breslau and knew Silesia very well, shared my despair.

"Think of the results," he murmured as he bent over the steering wheel. "Now the enmity between Poles and Germans is really being fostered. First, the crimes of Hitler against our people and then this

crime against yours here in Silesia—Europe is boring one hole after another in its own ship . . .”

We had to stop in front of a village railway station. The militia had barricaded the area.

About two hundred Germans were being herded into four freight cars. The farmers, artisans, and laborers of the little community were shuffling along in silent resignation, accompanied by their wives, children and aged parents, all headed towards the cars, which stood beside the little platform. In the space in front of the platform their sacks, packages, and baskets were emptied. The better articles of clothing and shoes were taken from them by the examiners, three Polish civilians and two soldiers. All cloth, fur pieces, jewelry were ruthlessly confiscated. The men were permitted to keep their wedding rings and watches, the women a brooch or necklace as well. The best items disappeared into the pockets of the examiners. The other things were piled high in a confused mess on some tables that had been moved out on the platform from the station.

Loaves of bread that the people were taking with them were cut to pieces. When a little metal container full of German money (which had been demonetized in the Polish sector and was therefore worthless) was found baked into one loaf, one of the soldiers kicked the peasant woman to whom it belonged so hard in the buttocks that she hit her head on the cobblestones and remained lying there, covered with blood. Two men, who might have been members of her family, carried the injured woman into the freight car without saying a word.

The doctor beside me shifted into reverse and stepped on the gas. The militiamen cursed. When he pointed to the red cross on the windshield, they let him pass.

I asked him why he had not helped the injured woman.

“How could I stand dealing with those unfortunate people?” he burst out irritably. “They would never believe me if I told them that those thieving rascals are not the Polish people.”

“As little as the rascals in the concentration camps were the German people.”

“And how will it end?” asked the doctor. “I’m afraid that Bolshevism will destroy our countries and the whole world.”

As we raced along the highway with its wonderful view of the mountains there were tears in our eyes; a friendship was established between us that has endured to the present day, despite the Iron Curtain.

In the towns and villages of the Riesengebirge the “systematic transfer” had also begun—“in the most humane way conceivable,” as the ministerial official had assured us. It was very much like what I had seen at the village station.

But there were large numbers of volunteers, most of them women, who had been robbed of their possessions and their homes and had no money, and who naturally were afraid of spending the winter in barracks with their children.

The milker-burgomaster of Karpacz, as Krummhübel had been called for several weeks (after three other Polish names had been "tried out" first) was beaming when he met me on the street. "Well, what do you say to that! More volunteers than room in train . . ."

But most of the volunteers were not immediately deported. The Polish administration had planned on expelling other people first. First of all, the farmers, who had managed to get along reasonably well till then on their little mountain farms, were driven out. And yet there were no Poles around who wanted to take over these farm homes, all of them rather poor.

Otherwise, the idea of vengeance for the monstrous crimes of the National Socialists in Poland continued to prevail. For example, an old woodsman was expelled for "sabotage," because he had sent a Pole out of his daughter's bedroom. A crippled farmer from our community was forcibly placed in a little sport car by the militia, who then commanded his wife to drive him to the depot. The meager possessions of the old people remained in the house, which was looted in a few hours. A farmer's wife was ordered to leave right after her husband had hanged himself from the stable door, in despair at the loss of his livestock. "You not useful for *robot*.* Let your rich Germany pay you pension," the commander of the militia had yelled in the distraught woman's tear-stained face.

The houses of most of those who were deported remained empty. They were thoroughly looted and then systematically demolished. Everyone took from them what he could use: the shingles, windows, doors, stoves, even the nails from the walls. Soon many homesteads that had been undamaged on the day of surrender looked like war ruins.

Our settlement seemed deserted. Of its two hundred people, eighty were still there—woodcutters, a few factory workers, three German industrial specialists, an innkeeper and his family, who had taken over the menial labor in their own inn for the new Polish "management," along with a Jewish, a Czech, and a German-American family. In addition, there were twelve Poles, who occupied the largest and best premises.

Since the people stayed indoors even during the day, and the few animals left were no longer driven out to pasture because of the lack of security, and most of the dogs had been shot by the Border Patrol, and since strangers simply did not appear anymore, the picturesque little place, once a center of attraction for many artists, looked as though it had been excavated from a lava flow—preserved but lifeless.

"Mine" and "thine" no longer existed—not even for the Germans. A Polish boy ran around in the boots of the expelled woodsman. A

**robot*: work.

German farmer's wife had the shopping bag of the deported teacher, and her daughter wore the coat of an old lady of the nobility, whom the militia had treated especially badly. Everyone succumbed to the lawlessness, the "club-law," which was rapidly destroying Silesia, a land that had flourished even during the war years.

Even my French friend, Loyer, lost his few possessions. One day at noon he stood before our house. Despite the cold winter day, he had no coat on. "They've robbed me of almost everything," he said dejectedly. "Now my marching orders to Prague for the flight home have arrived, and I'll be traveling half naked."

We asked him if the reign of terror had begun by now in Agnetendorf, too. Till then the village had not been affected by it so severely as other places.

"The presence of Gerhart Hauptmann still helps the Germans up there a little. But they can't hold out either. Beautiful Silesia—ruined, *perdu* . . ."

He looked through the window up at the Schneekoppe, sparkling in its first gleaming-white winter garment.

"If I tell about this in France—nothing but the truth . . ." he said softly, "do you think for a moment that anyone—anyone at all—will believe me . . . ?"

6 Hauptmann's Death

In Silesia, filled with lawlessness and the misery of millions of innocent people, Christmas of 1945 drew near.

I made my way furtively through the deserted land to Agnetendorf, which had formerly been filled with happy sportsmen at this time of year. This time it was deathly still and dark.

Only from the upper windows at Wiesenstein did the full, warm light shimmer down. True, the main entrance was barricaded with cross-beams and props, but still the house had remained a shining citadel of humanity.

"Bed me down on my mother's sofa," had been Gerhart Hauptmann's instructions. He spent the long twilight period with his dreams. "Let the lights shine bright. The true folk-festivals must be celebrated—even in times of distress and tears. They join the individual to his fellow-countrymen and they unite the various peoples of the same culture."

The old man on the handsome cherrywood sofa was silent a moment. Outside the window, snowflakes glistened in the light from the room.

"The eightieth Christmas that I am able to remember . . ."

Hauptmann meditated quietly. Suddenly he murmured, "Let me die—at long last! I'm not even any good at celebrating any more."

Margarete, at the head of the sofa, gently stroked his broad forehead, which contrasted strangely with the narrowness of his bird-like lower face, now still more emaciated than ever.

"The lighting of the tree awaits your signal," she said softly.

"Have you something to drink? There must still be a couple of bottles of champagne."

Hauptmann had become more animated again. The bottles were brought, the candles on the beautiful Christmas tree were lit. From the sofa, the old man raised his glass and said, "Let us drink to unity with our countrymen—to their spiritual rebirth!"

He smiled to himself, and then hesitantly and having a little trouble with his sentence structure, as had been the case for some time, he began

to tell about the Christmas of 1889, when, at the age of twenty-seven, he had finished his second drama, *Das Friedensfest* (THE RECONCILIATION), the scene of which likewise was laid in an isolated country house one Christmas Eve on the Schützenhügel near Erkner.

"Solitude can be heavenly—imbued with all creative power—but also—devilish, as, *exempli causa*, today and here in Silesia." And he asked that the radio be turned on—one of the few receivers permitted a German in the provinces under Polish occupation.

Scarcely had the "*Stille Nacht . . .*" begun to resound in the warm Biedermeier room, flooded with light, when there was a ring at the door downstairs.

Lena, a neighbor's little girl, appeared with an embarrassed smile and—a goose for Christmas dinner. After her came a little farmer, a forester, a lady painter, and finally even a messenger from the district capital. They had all groped their way through the darkness with its dangers, bringing greetings, flowers, and presents to give pleasure to their famous fellow-countryman, in whose home there was still a bit of their homeland.

Around the beginning of the new year, a difficult period began, even for Wiesenstein. The forces of greed and envy which had been set loose by the prevailing lawlessness defied the protection of the state and the military, particularly since the latter often made their own use of this lawlessness to destroy the Germans.

One evening a group of daring men in leather jackets put in an appearance at Wiesenstein. They said they were detectives, and their papers, which they presented immediately, were in Polish. Paul had to believe them. Their spokesman declared that the prosecuting attorney's office had ordered a search of the premises.

"It has nothing to do with Doctor Hauptmann's possessions. They are protected—of course. We have been instructed . . ."

The alleged commissioner of detectives asked to see the cellar. He went to a particular room. His companions followed him.

"Do these trunks and boxes belong to the Hauptmann family?" he asked the attendant imperiously.

For the first time Paul was nonplussed. He said "No!" The luggage belonged to Germans who had been ejected from their homes and thought that the last few possessions that they had managed to preserve were safe here.

The commissioner smiled amiably. "It's a good thing you told the truth. You see, we have in our possession a declaration from one of your countrymen. Even the Hauptmann house is not permitted to shelter the possessions of others. The contraband goods are confiscated . . ."

His companions carried the luggage out of the house without a word

and loaded it into a truck. After a polite farewell, they drove away. As it developed, they were especially clever bandits, to whom a German had betrayed the hiding place. The militia refused to search for the culprits, saying it would be "senseless."

The next visit to Wiesenstein was also an unpleasant one. It could have had serious results, but they were finally avoided by Hauptmann's presence of mind.

One evening a group of young Poles stood before the house. Paul had learned from bitter experience. He asked the men to return the next morning, saying that Doctor Hauptmann was sick and could not speak to anyone that evening. It was necessary to gain time to inform the authorities.

Whatever course the conversation took, the alleged journalists suddenly drew revolvers and burst out in an impassioned jumble of promises and threats. Paul lost his nerve. He let them in the house.

The young fellows strolled through the rooms, all brightly illuminated for safety's sake. That did not bother them. They pulled out drawers and opened cupboards. From time to time, something would disappear into a pants pocket. And they whistled, talked loudly, spat cigarette butts on the floor, lolled around in the easy-chairs. They had not bothered to remove their caps from their heads.

Suddenly they stood in the Biedermeier room—in the presence of the old man . . . "Come right on in, gentlemen!" he said from his chair. "Your youth warms my old heart. You wanted to inspect my house at an unusual hour. You have done so. And now, what else can I do for you?"

His friendly but superior tone confused the boys. They took off their caps and removed their cigarettes from their mouths. One of them said ingenuously, "We wanted to see the famous Wiesenstein." And then they left in a hurry. They were no longer in the mood for outrageous deeds.

At the door they asked for—a souvenir . . .

Paul asked if they could suggest something in particular. They chose an old leather suitcase of Hauptmann's with the labels of many international hotels on it.

Soon afterwards the Starost's office announced the visit of a real journalist. Hauptmann was indignant. He did not want to receive the Pole. But in view of the situation it was scarcely possible for him to refuse.

Although the old man had been spared reports about the dreadful things that took place during the expulsion, he had long since grasped the tragic fate of the eastern part of Germany. However, he shifted the major guilt from the Kremlin to the Poles, because their worst people were the oppressors in Silesia.

The journalist Stefan Trzcinski from Warsaw, who appeared the next day, was an adroit young man of rather limited education. He immediately rubbed Hauptmann the wrong way by announcing that he found Wiesenstein to be "built in an oriental style, with Mauretanian features."

"Never hear anything so stupid in my life," Hauptmann muttered under his breath furiously.

The Pole did not seem to have understood him. He remained quite amiable.

"I'm glad to see that you, although a German, still have a telephone that functions," he said unctuously. Apparently he wanted to hear Gerhart Hauptmann praise the Polish administration.

Instead, the old man said, "My dear sir, one that didn't function could only be regarded as a heap of steel and wiring."

In the course of the interview the journalist referred to the certificate of protection.

"I need no protection," replied Hauptmann with a sharpness that was not like him.

Taken aback, Trzcinski was silent. Margarete interjected: "Don't misunderstand us, my dear sir! We're grateful to your authorities and feel completely safe."

The old man cleared his throat quite audibly. He might well have been thinking of the spurious detectives and the vagabond "journalists."

Finally, when Trzcinski called the Germans a "hostile people" in alluding to Hitler's terror in Poland, Hauptmann answered simply, "Germany will soon work her way up again through the toil of all her people. That belief I will never lose."

"And you are going to Germany?" asked the interviewer.

"An agent of Marshal Zhukov offered me the opportunity to move to Dresden or Berlin. I could even take all my property with me. I declined . . ."

This interview, which appeared in the Polish press and was broadcast by the Polish radio stations, caused a sensation. Even the newspapers of the West commented on it. Gerhart Hauptmann was definitely being pushed out by the hangmen of Silesia, although they themselves protected him. It was then that the word "Armenia" was mentioned. I reminded Hauptmann of the famous sentence by Franz Werfel, who had remained his friend even during the years of enforced separation: "Turkey will be ruined by the corpses of Armenia." The old man nodded. His attitude apparently had displeased Moscow. Obviously, the Politburo had called upon Marshal Rokossovski in Liegnitz to wind up the Hauptmann affair, in a friendly way but speedily. In any case, Rokossovski sent Colonel Sokolov to Wiesenstein a number of times.

Relations between Sokolov and Hauptmann were excellent. Plain in appearance but well-bred, kind and cultured, the colonel had captured the old man's affections. He discussed works of literature with him—Classical, German, Russian, his own. Sokolov was astonishingly familiar with Hauptmann's works. He wanted to obtain the best possible treatment for Hauptmann, whom he admired so much.

When he visited him on April 7, 1946, he declared bluntly: "This time I am here in my official capacity. I am bringing you the last offer of the Soviet Military Administration. All Germans, without exception, are now to be evacuated from the Hirschberg district. The Polish government insists on it. Even you, my dear Doctor Hauptmann, can no longer remain here without endangering yourself."

"Well then, let's go . . ."

Hauptmann's words had been said so softly that the colonel had not understood them at first. Margarete confirmed Hauptmann's assent. But again, no time limit was set. Relieved, Colonel Sokolov returned to Liegnitz.

Later the old man cried out with emotion, "Gretchen, can I leave my Silesia alone?"

His faithful wife sought to calm him. "Soon the whole land will be deserted. You can no longer help the people who have been driven out."

To provide for all eventualities, packing began at Wiesenstein. The quiet rooms echoed with the sounds of the moving of furniture, of hammering and sawing. Hauptmann seemed to take no interest in it. Upstairs in the Biedermeier room, he listened to readings or he dictated. One evening he said to Anni and Sister Maxa, a nurse who had been in the house for several months: "But you *won't* get me away from Wiesenstein."

He had decided to die there. The symbol of his death in steadfast loyalty to Silesia was to glow through the darkness of Germany's catastrophe.

And yet his physical health during those bright May days of 1946 was excellent. Once again he was able to walk alone along the path through the park, around the house, and down to the gate. In the verdant meadow he saw the chubby little neighbor girl, Lenchen, looking very charming and lively, and this sight gave him great pleasure.

That evening he asked to see the Franciscan cowl that he had acquired many years before at the monastery of Santa Margherita. He expressed the wish to be buried in it.

The next morning Sister Maxa found him absorbed in the reading of the New Testament. He asked her to underline a passage in red pencil. "I've had this little book since the days of my youth, when I wanted to become a farmer. It goes in my coffin!" The passage that he was concerned with, from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 4, goes as follows: "He was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

Two days later he was ill. He was suffering from the third inflammation of the lungs since his visit to Dresden. The new family physician, Dr. Schmid, was instantly at hand. He telephoned me and asked if I could manage to obtain some penicillin. With a German physician and a Polish hotel director, both admirers of Hauptmann, I made the rounds of the neighboring hospitals. We succeeded in obtaining the medicine at the sanatorium for respiratory diseases at Hohenwiese, with the help of two German professors who were still practicing there. We took it to Wiesenstein immediately.

Three days later Hauptmann was free of fever. He felt his strength returning. "My last work will be an address to the German people. Someone else can give it for me! I want to say again what is needed: fearlessness, confidence—and unity . . ."

But it was not to be. A relapse caused him to lose consciousness. The fever rose and he rapidly became weaker.

The Silesians who were still in the Riesengebirge followed the death struggle of their great fellow-countryman closely. Messengers appeared at the back door at Wiesenstein, learned the most recent report of his decline, and then disappeared.

On the third of June Gerhart Hauptmann's last words were spoken. They were not a final testament of the great poet; they were not an appeal to the world; they were not words of love for his dearly loved wife—instead, they formed a question, a question that is shocking and that greatly shames mankind, because the situation made it plausible: "Am — I — still — in — my — own — house?"

One of the greatest German poets, and certainly Silesia's greatest, died in the awareness that he was in danger of being driven from his own home.

He was still in the "mystic protective armor of his soul," as he had called Wiesenstein. And his strong old heart still beat.

On the fifth of June, at ten minutes after three in the afternoon, he suddenly raised himself in bed once more, opened his eyes wide in his emaciated face, and fell back.

Almost out of her mind with grief, Anni rushed over to Margarete, who was standing in the doorway of the room at the moment, and pulled her into the room and over to the dead man's bed. Downstairs in the hall the Polish interpreter was waiting to translate the telegram summoning his son, Benvenuto.

The news of Hauptmann's death spread like wildfire. The morale of the persecuted Silesians, who still constituted forty percent of the population in the Riesengebirge, deteriorated still further. Up to the very last moment the people seemed to have been waiting for some miracle to be performed by the famous old man. Now they had lost all hope.

The Polish "new settlers" gave a sigh of relief. The legendary German, whom their own rulers had been compelled to protect, had died.

And no mountain wall had split open, no earthquake had struck Silesia. The scales of Fate seemed to fall in favor of Poland.

And the bandits, who were still active, sensed the dawn of a new day. Superstitiously, they had regarded Wiesenstein, protected as it was by the state, as a veritable treasure house. All the bars of gold, precious stones, and jewelry, that might well be stored up there, would naturally disappear into the great man's coffin. Their criminal plans were all formulated. After the body was buried and Mrs. Hauptmann had departed, they would wait for a dark and stormy night in the mountains and then break open Gerhart Hauptmann's coffin.

It would not have been the first desecration of burial grounds. In the churches and cemeteries of Silesia, the burial-vaults and graves had been plundered long since. The family vault of the Counts Matuschka in Arnsdorf had been broken into so often that the new Polish pastor there had a sign put on it, reading: "There are no longer any articles of value in this vault."

But there were also Poles who were indignant at this sort of activity. One of them had overheard the bandits' plans in a tavern. He sent a German to Margarete with a warning.

Up to the very end, the dead man had been astonishingly persistent in his wish to be buried in the park at Wiesenstein. Did he want to wait under the peaks of the Riesengebirge till the Silesians came home again?

His last desire could no longer be fulfilled. Margarete decided to leave and take his body with her. But trouble could be anticipated. Everything would have to be done rapidly but discretely.

The Soviet headquarters in Liegnitz seemed to be surprised when the special train that had been promised was still requested after Hauptmann's death. The *German Newspaper of the Red Army*, published by Russians for the Silesians, stated as late as three days after his death that the burial would take place on Whitsunday in Agnetendorf.

Once again, Colonel Sokolov acted as the contact between the Soviet headquarters and Wiesenstein. He was able to convince the right people that the settlement desired by the Kremlin was still appropriate even after Hauptmann's death. The threatened desecration of the body and a bit of coarse behavior by the local militia played an important role in facilitating their decision.

One hour after Hauptmann's death, the Agnetendorf militia had gathered outside Wiesenstein, and directly under the death chamber they had produced a deafening caterwauling, triumphantly blowing shrill whistles and toy trumpets, with an accompaniment crashed out on pot covers.

That hinted at the possibility of more trouble for Soviet headquarters. So away with the dead man, away with his retinue to the German Soviet Zone. Thus the special train was promised again.

Hauptmann's notary, Dr. Walter Roth, had succeeded in obtaining a fine zinc coffin in which the body could be transported. He also pro-

cured some plaster of paris, which was scarce at that time, so that the sculptor Ernest Rülke of Bad Warmbrunn was able to make a death mask. The funeral ceremonies took place on Whitsunday in the large work room on the ground floor at Wiesenstein. Gerhart Hauptmann wore the brown Franciscan cowl with its white cord. In his beautiful hands he held the New Testament of his youth. Under his head was placed the de luxe edition of his poem *Der grosse Traum* (THE GREAT DREAM), that Anton Kippenberg had had made for him for his eightieth birthday. Over his heart lay a little bag of Silesian soil.

His noble face was much more serious and perhaps also more stern than it had been in life, as if he were taking the harsh seriousness of Silesia's fatal hour over with him into the other world.

Behind the coffin stood the Florentine angel from the hall above. Bright green branches from the silver firs that Hauptmann had planted in the park adorned his bier. Margarete stood leaning with her back to the desk which had been placed at one side of the coffin, dressed all in white and completely alone.

About sixty people were present, among them friends of the family who had not yet been driven out of the country and citizens of Agnetendorf.

Their inappropriate and ill-matched clothing, often downright shabby, set them off from the Poles who appeared, dressed in irreproachable black: representatives of the authorities and the press, and a few who were simply curious. The only uniform to be seen was Colonel Sokolov's—that of the Soviet army.

The dignified ceremony was disturbed by a bit of tactlessness. The Polish *Gymnasium* Professor Gorka, the Starost's delegate, considered it proper to give his address in the German poet's house in the Polish language, although he could speak excellent German.

The German mourners were alarmed. Only a few knew Polish. The others, because of daily danger and distress, suspected that every foreign word concealed an insult or a threat. They stood there as though petrified. And yet Gorka was speaking learnedly and respectfully about the great man.

7 The Special Train

Right after the solemn funeral services a most unedifying spectacle began, everyone plotting against everyone else.

Colonel Sokolov had withdrawn to the dining room with the representatives of the Polish administration. While the hissing of the blowtorch used in sealing the coffin resounded through Wiesenstein, the Russian urged the Poles not to cause any further difficulties.

"And who will bear the cost of transportation out of the country? Who will pay for the special train?" The Poles remained stubborn.

Colonel Sokolov did not lose patience. "You provide the trucks to Hirschberg and the special train. The expense will be taken care of by us."

The Starost's representative cried, "Warsaw will have to decide that! Why should we be responsible if our rolling stock is stolen in Germany?" The Polish Communists did not trust their Soviet comrades.

The colonel rejected the insinuation. "When the Soviet military administration orders transportation, it is responsible for the safety of the equipment."

Finally, one of the Poles declared that the house had to be taken over that very day. "The Ministry of Justice insists that I live on the premises."

"You can do that as soon as Wiesenstein is vacated," replied the colonel.

Then the spokesman for the Ministry of Justice at long last played his trump card: "The Hauptmann house will be placed at the disposal of the League for Russo-Polish Friendship.* Their work is also important to the Soviet Union."

Colonel Sokolov was silent. Finally he was able to arrange for the postponement of the seizure until after the widow's departure.

*According to Charles Wassermann (*Europe's Forgotten Territories*, R. Roussell, Copenhagen, 1960) the house is now being used as a children's home.

During these lively negotiations—the first in a long series that lasted six full weeks—the attendant Paul appeared in the room with another man.

"Pardon me, Colonel Sokolov," he said ingratiatingly. "Please permit me to introduce my brother, Rudolf, who has assisted me most unselfishly with my difficult duties in the service of the deceased. I would like to take him along on the special train."

"By all means," said the Russian, his mind on other matters.

"Brother Rudolf" was a German employee of the Landrat's office who was no more related to Paul than a lady friend of Rudolf's was—or than the wholesale grocer from Hirschberg, who had helped the Hauptmanns a few times, or than a number of other people. The lawlessness in Silesia had not failed to leave its trace on the outlawed Germans. The motto everywhere was: "Every man for himself . . ."

For the time being, though, there was no possibility of anyone escaping. Day after day, week after week went by. The dead man in his zinc casket remained with the living in Wiesenstein. His widow spent many hours daily near it, and this undermined her great vitality.

And there were telephone conversations right and left: from Agnetendorf to Liegnitz and Hirschberg, from Rokossovski's headquarters to Moscow, Warsaw, and Berlin, and then back to Breslau, Hirschberg, Agnetendorf. Somehow it did not seem possible for the Poles to round up a locomotive and a few cars for this purpose, although the crowded evacuation trains left Kohlfurt day after day, each one pulled by two express locomotives.

Finally, on July 17, Paul and I were called to the Starost's office in Hirschberg. As we entered the conference room we saw Colonel Sokolov and a young Soviet lieutenant sitting in the midst of the Polish officials.

The Starost declared bluntly that the special train would leave Hirschberg that evening. The trucks would be available from noon on. And so there were six hours left for packing and loading.

Startled, I looked at the attendant. He had turned pale. Big drops of sweat stood out on his forehead. The arrangement was sheer idiocy.

How was a huge building like Wiesenstein to be emptied in so short a time and everything loaded on trucks and then stowed away in freight cars, even though the individual items, the books and works of art, were already packed? And the seven other families, who lived in four different localities—how were they to get their possessions assembled in Hirschberg?

I turned for help to the colonel, with whom I, too, got along well. He smiled irresolutely. "An hour or two probably won't matter after such a long wait," he suggested soothingly.

Then began the haggling about the things that could be taken along. In the opinion of the Poles, almost everything was forbidden—even typewriters.

At that, Colonel Sokolov became angry for the first time. "That's

impossible! Every creator of culture needs a typewriter in this day and age."

Finally, we succeeded in getting permission for each family to take a sewing machine as well. All other mechanisms and household appliances, such as vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, hotplates, were to be taken from us. Even the export of furniture from Poland was suddenly forbidden. Reference was made to an old law of the year 1920.

Quick-wittedly, Colonel Sokolov declared, "The furniture of the world-famous dead man are museum pieces."

No objection could be made to that. The furniture from Wiesenstein could be loaded. The rest of us had not reached "museum status." At the last moment, we were deprived of our property on the basis of a law that had been directed in 1920 against the Germans in Posen and eastern Upper Silesia.

When we left the Starost's office it was eleven o'clock. We had seven hours. In a truck driven by a member of the militia, I hurried away towards Krummhübel. Paul and five trucks raced to Agnetendorf.

What happened then was inevitable. The chaos that the Polish administration had willfully produced in order to deprive even the "privileged" Germans of their last possessions enveloped the Poles as well. At five o'clock the departure of the special train was postponed till the next morning. A precious night had been won.

The seven families had half finished with their packing and loading, mainly because the local militia, who stood guard over the homes of the departing Germans, sent almost everything back into the house, saying that it could not be exported. Hand irons, wash tubs, mattresses, sofa pillows, curtains, carpets had to be left behind. Phonographs and records, tobaggans, iceskates, skis, hotplates, etc., were immediately confiscated. A painter had to take all his paintings out of their frames, since the export of picture frames out of Poland was allegedly not allowed. Every time that something was forbidden, they referred, correctly or incorrectly, to similar decrees by the National Socialists in Poland.

Wiesenstein was spared the militia. Of course, there were guards present there, too, but they did not hinder the moving. And yet there was a shortage of helping hands. The Poles of Agnetendorf, who had all gathered in the park to watch the show, did not stir a finger. In spite of the offer of high wages, Paul was unsuccessful in obtaining the help of a single Pole in the work of loading.

And so the few Germans of the upper part of the village and the staff of Wiesenstein had to cope alone with the difficult and extensive task, and without enough suitable equipment, such as straps and moving carts.

The cases filled with valuable manuscripts, which were built into the walls in the study, had to be torn out of the paneling. Axe-blows resounded, iron wedges crunched, boards cracked and split. And in the corner of the room stood the zinc casket with the great dead poet, whose life-work had been preserved in these cases.

The heavy boxes were carried and dragged through the rooms and the park, and many an object which had been preserved for decades was senselessly shattered by all the turning and tilting. It was necessary to leave the tremendously heavy Dutch baroque wardrobes behind.

And again and again, trunks, boxes, and bundles of unknown origin kept turning up. The desperate Silesians had devised all sorts of tricks to smuggle their own things out along with those belonging to the Hauptmann family. Paul and Stief, the estate superintendent, were well aware of that. But what were they to do? This was a unique emergency. They shrugged their shoulders—and loaded these things, too . . .

The Polish idlers in the park observed all this and informed the Polish authorities.

When I arrived at the Hirschberg freight depot the next afternoon—the train's departure had been postponed once more—I was confronted with a thoroughly demoralizing sight.

I had been partially prepared. We had just passed through a long and severe war. The old order had been wantonly destroyed; a new one had not been created. Besides, everywhere there was a lack of material goods, of the will to work, and of a sense of responsibility. I had not expected the train to be carefully made up and entirely clean. But what I saw was—incredible . . .

The "special train" for Gerhart Hauptmann, lauded by all those members of the world press under orders from Moscow, stood—not beside the completely unused passenger loading ramps—but in the station yard for livestock. Since many trains with Poles who had been expelled from the east had arrived in Hirschberg in the last few weeks, and since they—in contrast to the expelled Silesians—were permitted to take their horses, cows, goats, and sheep with them, the concrete platform was covered with a thick, dense layer of animal and human excrement, which had been shoveled out of the cars as they arrived and then spread out by the livestock and their herdsman during the unloading of the trains.

Next to this befouled thoroughfare stood eight closed freight cars of German origin and two filthy and badly battered passenger cars, with all windows broken, such as had been used during the war as emergency cars on branch lines in isolated parts of Galicia and Podlesia.*

I went through the compartments. In which of them was Margarete Hauptmann to travel, who was, after all, seventy-one years old? One compartment was just as unsuitable as the next. Finally, a few women from our group arrived at the station, and they gathered together some brooms, water, and dusters, and began to clean the compartments. We men scattered insect powder and nailed up pieces of cardboard. After

*Polish provinces.

we had been driven from our homes in such a hurry, we had plenty of time—all the endless time of the Slavic East. While we put the cells of our exile at least halfway in order, a violent rain began to fall. The filth on the ground immediately became a single slippery mass with hundreds of flies buzzing over it.

The freight cars were loaded but still open. We took turns standing guard by them. The number of idle spectators who gathered around constantly increased.

When the Soviet lieutenant who was to accompany the train appeared, we heaved sighs of relief.

Someone asked when we would leave. He looked us over with a gloomy expression on his face. "They're making a lot of difficulties here. Who knows . . . ?" He met further questioning with the inscrutable Soviet smile.

Finally we found out what had taken place from Leo.

This blithe young fellow had suddenly appeared before me. "I'm Leo and am under orders to keep an eye on you people here." I sat down with the boy in an empty compartment.

The Polish administration would not dispatch the train because it was being misused to "smuggle contraband goods." But the Soviet headquarters insisted that it be sent.

Leo was a Pole—but a Stalinist. He worked for the UB, the Polish secret police, which may be regarded as a branch of the Soviet MVD. "When they inspect later on—and they will inspect—show them the cars that have only your things in them."

Leo gave excellent advice, and he was a bright fellow in other ways. "What will save you is cash—and who doesn't need that nowadays?" he asked with a crafty smile.

I understood. While Leo conversed with my wife, I went to the other members of the party and in no time at all I had collected twenty thousand *zloties*. I gave them to him. The boy beamed. And for the first time we dared to smile again.

Late in the afternoon a detachment of Polish soldiers, a sergeant and five men, marched up. They wore clean uniforms and seemed well-disciplined. The Soviet lieutenant followed them. "Colonel Sokolov picked them out himself in the barracks—escort for train . . ."

The Polish civilians, who had surrounded the cars like a swarm of bees, were suddenly very quiet. They retreated a few steps. The soldiers took over the guarding of the freight cars. Leo went unobtrusively from one to the other to inform them about the state of affairs.

In the midst of a new burst of the heavy rainfall that had set in at twilight, the last "passenger," the dead Gerhart Hauptmann, arrived.

The truck, driven by a militiaman, raced through the wet ordure and splashed it high on both sides. On the open truck, dripping wet, was the poet's huge desk. On it stood the zinc casket. It had developed a crack. On the chairs from the study, which stood beside the desk, were

crouched the steward of Wiesenstein and his wife, wrapped up in blankets. They had been the last to leave Wiesenstein.

The freight car that was reserved for the dead had just been cleaned out. Six German men carried the casket inside and put the desk and the chairs in with it. Despite the nervous strain of the chaotic evacuation Margarete had not forgotten the flowers for the coffin. The rest of us added a few evergreen boughs from the peaks of the Riesengebirge, which were glowing in the evening light.

Soon night fell. Our audience withdrew. The Polish soldiers sang the melancholy songs of their homeland. The train stood—still without a locomotive—in the filthy cattle station.

The next morning a committee of about twenty people, many in uniform, appeared on the station platform.

A broad-shouldered man in an elegant, tailor-made suit declared that the train contained "contraband." We denied it.

A Pole pulled out a list. "Sixteen sewing machines alone are in the cars," he cried angrily.

"The hidden currency approaches the millions," howled a third.

We denied this, too.

The broad-shouldered man asked to speak to Mrs. Hauptmann. We took him to the compartment and at the same time sent for the Soviet lieutenant, who had slept in the train with us.

The conversation between Margarete and the official—he had been sent by the office of the *Voyvoda** in Breslau—was polite and proper.

"I can't sew at all, myself," Mrs. Hauptmann said jokingly, as she calmly smoked a cigarette.

"And the people of the household,"—she looked at Paul, who was standing behind the Pole and trying to prompt her by moving his lips silently—"They naturally own sewing machines," she continued with great presence of mind. "German women are peculiar that way. Every girl of marriageable age buys a sewing machine the very first thing. But sixteen! That surely must be quite an exaggeration, my dear sir."

"We'll have to inspect the cars," the Pole replied.

Mrs. Hauptmann nodded. "I quite agree with you."

"And the money?" asked the Pole. "How much money would you have with you, for example, my dear lady?"

"I? None at all."

It had come out with such assurance that the official was speechless. Margarete continued, "We have become poor. But what we still possess, our major-domo shall count out for you."

Paul took a packet of bills out of his pocket. The official leafed through it and returned it. "No one could object to that."

*Title of a Polish official.

"You see! And the number of sewing machines will prove to be just as reasonable."

With a slight bow, the official left the compartment.

Meanwhile, the inspection of the cars had begun. Leo led the officials through the confusion of boxes, baskets, trunks, and bundles. "Let's open this one here," he suggested. "I can see already—it's beds—they're permitted." And at another place: "Which box is to be opened?" Someone pointed to one of the boxes. "Let's see—books—specifically sanctioned." As they made their way, he delivered the following patter: "Write it down, comrades! I've discovered six sewing machines so far. If you include the staff of Wiesenstein, ten are allowed for the whole company."

"Among the things from Agnetendorf alone there are sixteen, hidden somewhere. Our report is reliable," cried the militia officer.

Leo suggested that they could certainly unload the cars again and have everything opened. "If *you* will be responsible, Comrade Lieutenant. It would certainly take two days."

The police lieutenant declined to accept the responsibility for that. The inspection of the cars was brought to an end. Only a few boxes of groceries that had been delivered too late were refused clearance.

After that, they called us all together out on the filthy platform. Roll was called by the list from Soviet headquarters, which had been countersigned at the Starost's office. Everyone was present. The staff of Wiesenstein numbered thirty-six persons—instead of seven. There was a caretaker, furnace man, bookkeeper, gardner, cook, and other male employees and chamber maids in great abundance. It seemed as though the dead man had been—not a German poet—but an American millionaire. For the benefit of his neighbors and fellow-countrymen, the staff had been unobtrusively "filled out."

The check for money was distressing. We were allowed to take 500 *Reichsmarks* apiece with us—and we all had several times that amount, though naturally not the suspected millions.

Otherwise, how would we have been able to look our oppressed relatives, friends, and neighbors in the eye? They were being forced out of the country on the regular deportation trains without funds. From the very beginning it was clear to us that the preferential treatment that was being shown us involved also the duty of "rescuing" at least some money. It was difficult to take along packages of any size for others, and our friends had realized that. But an envelope with a few bills . . .

We had all hidden a few thousand marks—between books, in the bedding, among the groceries, any amount of which we were permitted to take with us. The little packets that had been slipped to us right at the station burned in our pockets.

A woman saved the embarrassing situation by courageously declaring that *she* had 730 marks. She took the bills out of her pocketbook. "Which of you gentlemen should I give the extra 230 to?"

Even the Polish chief inspector smiled at that. "Keep them!" he said. "And how much do you have?" He pointed to the professor of Catholic

theology who was a member of our group. The priest had only the quota for himself and his aunt. A third admitted to a thousand marks for each member of his family, another, nine hundred; another said it "might come to" around three thousand for four persons . . .

The committee took down the figures and added them up. There was no question of an amount in the millions. In checking the compartments, they found an envelope with three thousand marks. The owner had declared them. They could not quibble about that. The inspection committee left the station.

And—we waited . . . We still did not know whether the special train was leaving and if so, when. The Soviet lieutenant had disappeared. Leo had disappeared. The guards stood silent in front of the cars. We had given each man a few *zloties* and some cigarettes and promised them more if the train reached the Neisse River without being looted. The sergeant had smiled. "No looting! Our orders say, shoot 'em down . . ."

But he did not know when the train was leaving, either, or if it was leaving at all. At two o'clock in the afternoon, a railway official appeared, sealed the freight cars, and went away again. At three o'clock Leo returned. He laughed. "Everything's taken care of. Those stupid people—with their sewing machines and millions of marks! If the great Stalin says that the train goes—even *with* sewing machines—then it goes, here in Poland, too. They'll have to get used to that . . ."

He slipped away again and after a little while returned with a new report: "The locomotive has now been sent for—to be here at five o'clock. Your friends are already waiting in Forst . . ."

We had no idea who the friends waiting in Forst might be. But Leo was also informed on that point. "The report has been telephoned in. At the Niesse there'll be a state reception—with newsreel cameras, press, and radio . . ."

And finally the train began to move. We stood at the broken windows and saw the peaks of the Riesengebirge slowly sink from sight in the distance. We had spent many happy years there, safe and secure in the mountains. When the Schneekoppe disappeared in the opalescent haze of the late afternoon, most of us wept.

The first station was Bolkenhain. The train stopped on a side track. Chattering excitedly, a crowd of Poles soon appeared. The Soviet lieutenant climbed out of the brakeman's compartment of the last freight car; he had been sketching the Silesian landscape during the course of the slow trip from that vantage point. The guards, armed with machine pistols, silently stationed themselves in front of the cars.

After an hour the traffic superintendent appeared. No red cap anymore, no familiar signal disc. The Polish official at this German railroad station raised a red flag. The train went on in the direction of Liegnitz.

The rich land of Lower Silesia was no longer recognizable. Where only the year before endless grain fields had alternated with endless fields of potatoes, now a hodge-podge of wheat, rye, oats, poppies seeded by the wind, and all kinds of weeds waved in the breeze. An occasional disabled tank could still be seen rapidly disappearing in the bluish-green wilderness. Telegraph wires were broken and some of the poles were knocked over; whole villages along our route were deserted . . .

At Liegnitz the train stopped again for a long time. Then it went on to Sagan, finally to Sorau. There it remained until late at night.

We had made ourselves as comfortable as possible in the ruined compartments. We were so exhausted from the agitation and excitement of the last few days that we were only aware in our state of half sleep and half wakefulness that the train went a ways, stopped again, went on . . . No one knew by now exactly where we were.

A shrill blast from the locomotive awoke me. I looked out at the passing landscape in the grey light of dawn—pine trees, sand . . . The Lusatian Neisse could not be far away now.

A sign appeared: Tuplice. What was the real name of the place? We no longer knew our way around in our own homeland.

The train stopped in front of the little station house. About twenty Poles in uniform and rain capes stood in a line on the platform. They jerked open the compartment doors, swung their riding crops, and bellowed: "*Chodz*—out of the cars! But *pretko*—*zaraz, zaraz* . . ." And they brandished their switches in our faces, which were still puffed with sleep.

We were all without our jackets and shoes. Our hair was uncombed. Some of us were wearing nothing but underclothing. One man was in his pajamas.

Our protests were greeted with angry blows with the riding crops against the compartment walls. We had to leave the train—just as we were. Thoroughly bewildered by this new development, we stood in the grey morning light on the station platform. A drizzling rain was falling, and we were cold. Some of the children were crying.

Meanwhile, I had found out that Tuplice was Teuplitz vor Forst. The Neisse flowed a few yards from the station. Where could the Soviet lieutenant be? I tried to go and look for him. A soldier of the border guard aimed a blow in my direction with his riding crop. I cursed in Polish. It did no good. Finally, the Russian climbed out of his compartment, still yawning—he had gone right on sleeping soundly in spite of the terrible racket.

Our train guards stood in silence before the eight freight cars. They held their machine pistols ready for use.

Then the commander of the border guard made his appearance in a fancy comic-opera uniform and declared that the train would be unloaded and everything opened one by one. The Russian at once protested. The Pole said he had orders to this effect, but he was unable to produce them.

Apparently the Hirschberg inspection committee had made one last

attempt, just fifty yards from the Neisse line, to bring off the big coup that they had failed in themselves. They had denounced us over the telephone—probably again with the comical tale of the sewing machines and the millions of marks.

How can I describe our consternation and the misery and dangerousness of our position! The "creators of culture" from the Riesengebirge, for whom the Soviet headquarters had obtained the special train after overcoming all sorts of difficulties, suddenly found themselves once again at the mercy of arbitrary force. There were exactly fifty-eight of us, including families and employees. All of us—except Mrs. Hauptmann and a woman who was in the last weeks of pregnancy—stood half-naked in the rain in the roofless village railway station; we were guarded by ruffians who were filled with hatred and armed with riding crops and pistols; and we could regard it as only too likely that we would lose our last few possessions—and perhaps even unclothed as we were—be driven over the nearby line of demarcation.

The Soviet lieutenant had hurried over to the Polish train guards and ordered them to prevent the opening of the cars under any circumstances until he had clarified the situation. Then he spent a long time at the telephone in the station. Through the windowpanes we saw the angry twist of his mouth, his blazing eyes, his gesticulating hand.

In the meantime, a second Polish officer had appeared on the platform. He had better manners. First of all, he gave orders for us to be allowed to return to the compartments to get dressed. Then he, too, telephoned for a while and then returned to the platform.

There he explained to the sergeant that they were planning only a spot inspection and demanded that the cars be opened.

The sergeant had come to attention. "On this trip we are subject to the orders of the Soviet Army. The lieutenant must give the order."

But the lieutenant had disappeared. The Polish officers walked nervously back and forth on the platform. Their soldiers stood around idly. And time passed. We had already been held in Teuplitz for five hours.

Around noon a Red Army major suddenly appeared on the platform. He was in his forties and as tall and wide as an old-fashioned farm cupboard. The slender lieutenant, who had gone to Forst to get him, was completely hidden behind him. When the major began to shout—and he immediately burst out in a bellow that would have done credit to a muleteer—his impressive full beard kept time to the words and his huge face turned as red as a turkey gobbler.

Unfortunately, none of us knew Russian, so I do not know to this day what the Russian said to the Poles. It must have been impressive. In any case, the opposition of the Polish officers was silenced after the second sentence. Soon the Russian also stopped talking. He and the Poles went into the office of the border guard where—as we learned later—a protocol was signed. Then the major came over to the train with a heavy tread, returned the salute of the Polish train guard, invited

us Germans to get back on the train, and climbed up on the foot-board of the locomotive. There was a prolonged blast on the whistle, and the special train began to move.

On the other side of the passenger cars—invisible to the border guard—our train guards appeared. We shook hands with the Poles and in the process gave them the additional tips that had been promised them. They saluted. The sergeant called to me, "There are real soldiers in Poland, too!" We waved our thanks from the moving train. Another shrill whistle—two Polish border guards climbed down from a wooden tower on the bridge, exchanged a sentence with the Soviet major, and raised a red and white flag.

The train passed over the Lusatian Neisse, no longer a little river in the interior of Germany, but now, in theory, its "eastern border." In the narrow strip of no-man's land, where weeds had been allowed to proliferate, the first Soviet guard posts appeared. A long whistle, and we pulled up to the station at Forst.

Spotlights went on, cameras clicked, the massive newsreel equipment began to hum, a radio reporter spoke rapidly into his microphone.

The platform was black with people—representatives of the Soviet military administration, of the Soviet-German administration, of the press of the East Zone, and many citizens of Forst.

Most of them had been waiting twenty hours for the "Special Train for Gerhart Hauptmann."

What happened from this moment until July 28, when the zinc casket was finally laid to rest shortly after sunrise in the sands of the village of Kloster on the island of Hiddensee,* may be assumed to be known.

The solemnities ran their course according to the ritual developed in the Soviet Union, a ritual which had its origin in old Byzantium. They reached their climax in the invocation of the "wise teacher and leader of the peoples, the greatest philosopher, statesman, and military leader of all time"—*Stalin!*

In Forst there was a welcome of this nature for the widow and a wreath was laid on the dead man's casket. Exactly the same ceremony took place ten hours later by torchlight at the Berlin-Schöneweide station.

The casket was also met by torches at Stralsund. The funerary affair in the beautiful, old city hall was again very ceremonious, in the style of the new Byzantium. The honor guard of university professors of the East Zone, of "activists" and "new settlers" (what might these exiles have felt at *this* catafalque!), the speeches of the prominent representatives of the SMA (Soviet Military Administration), of the Soviet-German administration, of the SED (German Socialist Unity Party),

*In the Baltic, just northwest of the larger island of Rügen.

then music, and then again—speeches . . . Everything went according to the rites of propaganda. Only Johannes R. Becher was able to strike a human note. Wilhelm Pieck claimed the dead poet for the Communist "Unity Party"; Colonel-General Tulpanov referred to him as "a person who had been connected with the socialist workers' movement, hostile to militarism and Prussianism, one of those German prophets who were permitted to guide their people out of the darkness and into the radiant light of Communism." Functionaries of the SED spoke of "victory over the forces of reaction" or described Hauptmann's "powerful voice, raised in indignation against the tyranny and barbarity of the tsars." The propaganda mills were grinding—completely in accordance with the prescribed "ceremony." God was not even named.

What was all that supposed to have to do with the man whose zinc casket had been dragged senselessly all over the country and now stood on the magnificent catafalque in a sea of the most beautiful flowers? He had hated tyranny and barbarity in *every* form—and most recently in the Asiatic-Slavic form that had been responsible for a mass uprooting of peoples without parallel in history.

There was no more talk about that than there was about God. This double silence was in line with the distorted souls of the Russian and German functionaries of Stalinism on the podium.

Did no one notice it? An old artisan from Breslau, whom I had known for years, came to me after the ceremonies. We shook hands and then walked alone together in the endless funeral procession to the harbor. Thousands of the residents of Stralsund lined the way.

With a mockery born of pain, the old man asked whether these ceremonies would have appealed to our great Gerhart.

I shook my head. We were silent a long time.

Suddenly the Silesian said, "Really, it shouldn't matter to him, the nonsense they come out with. It's nothing but wind compared with his great achievements."

Yes, it was just wind. And it had already died away. With Gerhart Hauptmann's last sea voyage to Hiddensee, the new Byzantium, which we had had to put up with in silence for a little while, disappeared utterly.

The simple service in the village church at Kloster, wonderfully planned by Hauptmann's friend, Pastor Gustavs, and the quiet devotion at the grave in the early morning light finally gave Gerhart Hauptmann back to *his* world.

As the sandy soil of the Baltic island mingled with the heavy, granular earth from the Riesengebirge, which Margarete had carefully brought along for this purpose, we felt one thing with compelling force: this place of rest, high above the rolling waves of the sea, will not be his last—even though he may remain here for years . . .

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have been so helpful in my work on this translation and in making its publication possible.

Professor Erich Funke, formerly head of the German Department at the State University of Iowa, first suggested that I undertake the translation, and he was very generous with his time and assistance. In addition, he has written the introduction, which adds so much to the reader's appreciation of Gerhart Pohl's book.

Dr. Pohl has himself given a fuller explanation of various passages with local reference, and he and the Lettner Verlag very graciously permitted the publication of the translation and made possible the use of the photographs from the original German edition.

In addition to Dr. Funke, the following have read my manuscript in whole or in part and have made many helpful suggestions: Professor H. O. Lyte, formerly of the State University of Iowa, Professor Robert A. Caldwell of the University of North Dakota, Professor B. Q. Morgan, formerly at Stanford University, Dr. Hans Helmut Schober, formerly Studienrat in Duermen, Westfalen, and Mrs. Charles M. Morgan, my mother.

I should also like to thank the Göttinger Arbeitskreis for its financial support and in particular its Executive Director, Freiherr von Braun, who provided the photograph of Hauptmann's house used on the jacket and the map on the end sheets. Without his continuing interest the book would never have been published.

Locally, I am indebted to George W. Starcher, President of the University of North Dakota, who authorized the publication by the University Press, and to Joe W. Hughes, Manager of the Press, and to all his staff.

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